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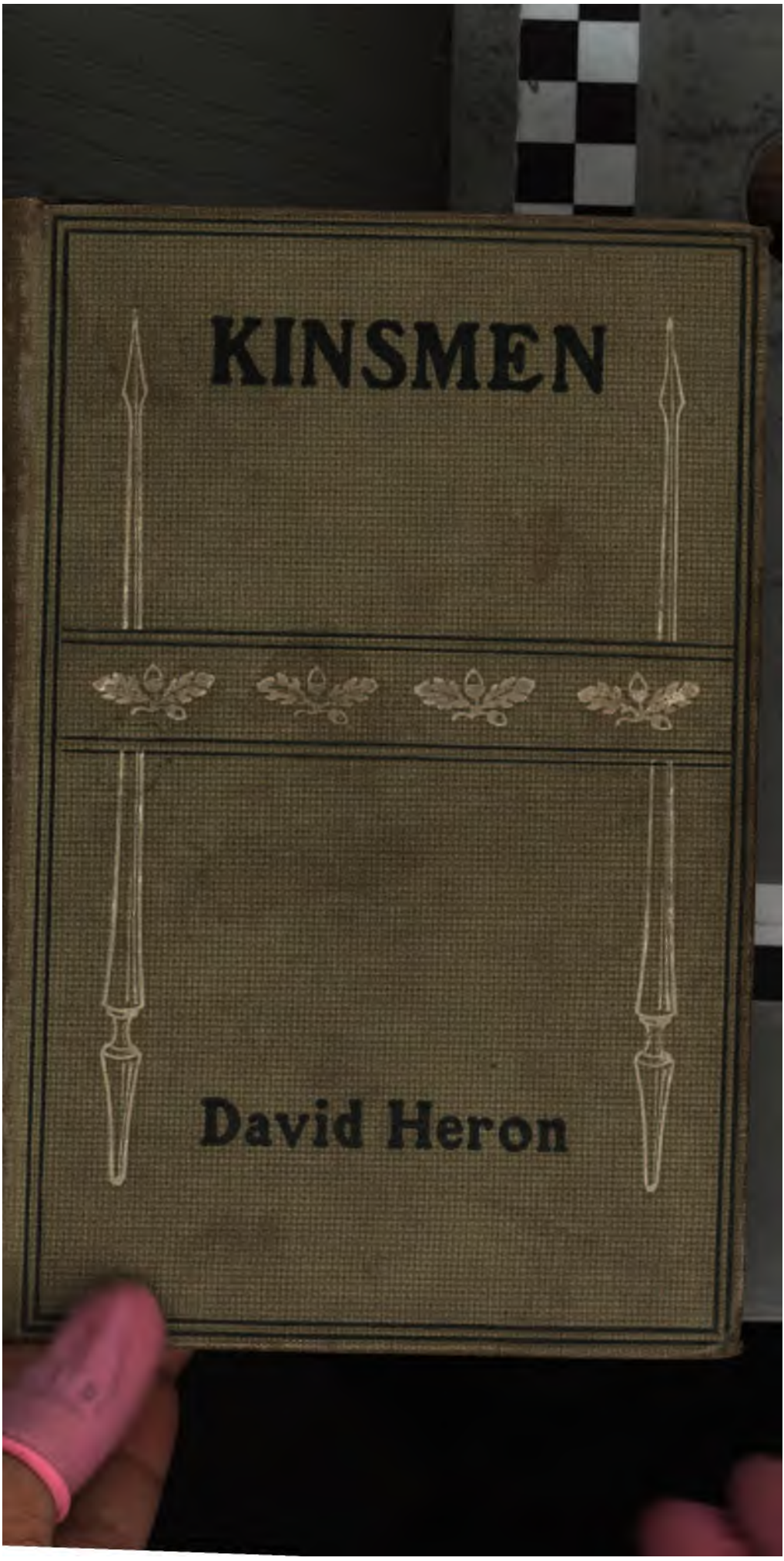
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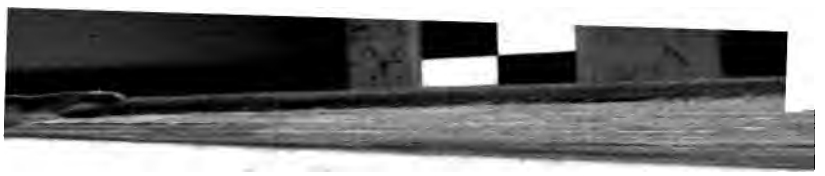
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KINSMEN
David Heron



E. D. Collins

Christmas 1906.





KINSMEN.





KINSMEN.

A NARRATIVE.

BY

DAVID HERON.

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1906.





TO

A. M.

AND

R. P.





FOREWORD.

I HAVE kept to the old date for Dundee's birth, *i.e.* 1643. His latest biographer has placed it several years after this.

It was Patrick Graham the younger, of Inchbraikie, son to Montrose's curator, who was out with his Chief in the Highland campaign, but I did not discover this till I had become too much attached to Patrick the elder to part with him.

I should perhaps add that Charles II.'s attentions to Princess Louise are not a matter of history.





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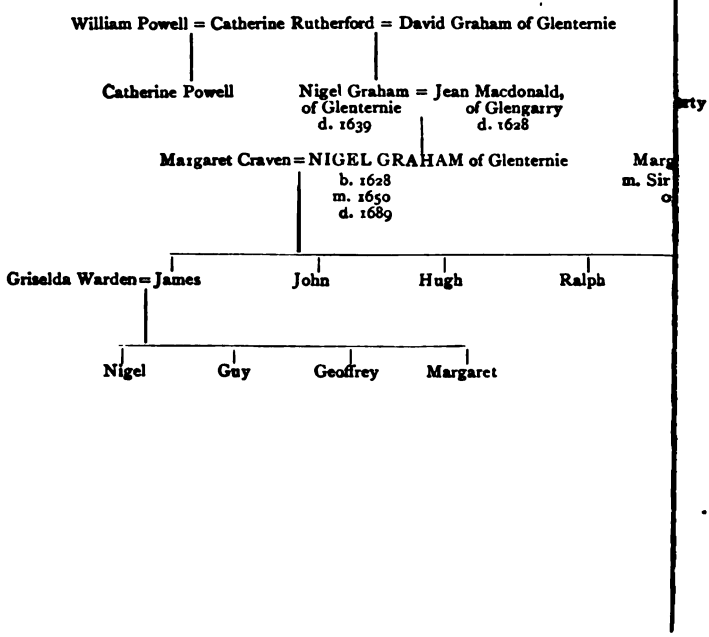
that he was," and my wife glanced up to ... hung above us a portrait of my friend, leader and *kinsman—the* great Marquis of Montrose.



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CHAPTER

RELATIONSHIPS C





KINSMEN.

CHAPTER I.

A PROMISE.

GLENTERNIE,
December 10, 1688.

MANY a time and oft when the wind moaneth in the pine-trees and the Ternie rusheth wildly down the glen on a bitter winter's night, I sit in my chair near the warm Yule logs on the hearth, with my dear wife at my side and the grandchildren at our feet, and I tell them tales of stirring days long gone by. Last night was such an one, and when the little ones had gone to their beds and we were alone, Margaret said unto me,

"Truly, Nigel, much hath chanced in your life worthy of recount. Why could you not write it in a book? Then when we have passed away the children will have it and will recall what we have told them. Moreover, it will serve to impress on their minds all that he was," and my wife glanced up to where there hung above us a portrait of my friend, leader and kinsman—the great Marquis of Montrose.



"In truth, dear heart," quoth I, "if it doth that it may be well written."

So here am I this morning in my study. I see Nigel and Guy without, wrestling bravely together on the terrace, while Margaret and little Geoffrey are playing in the snow with our good hound Bruce. The names and faces of the little ones carry me back far in my memory, forty years or more, to the pleasant garden at Rhenen and the busy streets of Paris and the Hague. Of these I will write anon, but I must show first how it was that I came to leave my Perthshire home, where my fathers had dwelt for many generations, and wander an exile in foreign parts for nigh on fifteen years.

* * * * *

I was born at Glenternie on the second day of July, in the year 1628. My mother died at my birth. She was an Highlandwoman, and near of kin to MacDonald of Glengarry. It was to my Highland nurse, and to the visits I paid to Glengarry as I grew older, that I owe my knowledge of the Gaelic tongue, which has often been of good service to me. Before I was a year old my father's half-sister, Mistress Catherine Powell, came to live at Glenternie to train me up in the way that I should go. She was an English lady, who liked not our cold north nor our Scottish ways, and I fear I never loved her over much, and was often undutiful towards her. But now, looking back on my childhood, I feel grateful for her kindness and care, and I can well understand what a



sacrifice it must have been for her to leave her English home and dwell with us Hyperboreans for sixteen years.

My very earliest remembrances are of no special interest and I will pass at once to my fifth birthday, which hath ever stood out with singular clearness in my mind. In the forenoon of that day my father took me for a ride, and full proud was I to set forth by his side on a little nag, which he had but that very morning given unto me. The animal was not too quiet, and anon, startled at somewhat in our path, set off at full gallop. I pressed my knees against his sides, held the reins as tightly as I could, and thought my last moment had come. At a turn of the road I perceived a gentleman on horseback, followed by a couple of attendants. A moment later, with a slight movement of his hand, the horseman had turned and caught my rein, bringing my pony to a standstill. Then he stroked its head, speaking to it reassuringly, and was about to address me when my father rode up, and seeing me unhurt, turned him to the stranger, whom he greeted warmly with doffed hat and outstretched hand. I, meanwhile, gazed upon my rescuer respectfully. In my childish mind I wondered whether he were the King, for never had I seen so noble a carriage; and twitching my father's doublet, I whispered,

"Who is it, sir?"

My father laid a hand on my shoulder.

"Nigel," said he, "this is the Head of the Clan."

I raised my cap and gazed upon the stranger with the more eagerness. The young Earl of Montrose laughed merrily at my father's words, and glancing down at me with a smile that won my heart upon the instant, he said,

"I am proud of you, my little cousin. You will make a good horseman one day."

And I, who had a ready word for all, and a boldness that mine aunt had often told me ill became my tender years, could say naught for once, but gazed on him in admiration, silent and abashed. I knew not what it was that overawed me, but all the week that he was at Glenternie I longed for speech with him, and yet was shy when he drew near. Nevertheless, he would often speak to me, for he loved children; and one afternoon which lives in my memory he took me out with him. As we went along he told me the tale of Perseus and Andromeda, which seemed to me the most delectable I had ever heard.

Thus a week flew by like a day, and then I heard him tell my father he must be gone. I learnt, moreover, that he was about to pass into foreign parts, and sojourn in France and Italy for two or three years. For a week I had lived in Fairyland, and now my dream was at an end. I fled away to my little chamber and wept till I could weep no more. Then I bethought me—he was so kind, so gracious—if I prayed him to let me go with him, would he not take me? I dried my tears and departed to seek him, but in no wise could I find him alone all that day, and when mine aunt sent me to bed I



had had no converse with him. I bade her good night demurely enough, and hastened, not to my bed but to her rose-garden, where I plucked the sweetest roses I could find and then slipped up to the Earl's room to await his coming. Ere long I heard his step, and in he came.

I turned from the bowl into which I had thrust the flowers and faltered out,

"I—I—pray you, sir——"

Then, despite my five years, the tears came unbidden.

He looked surprised, and shutting the door, he lifted me in his arms and set me on his knee. By degrees I sobbed out my trouble, and prayed him to grant me my boon. Very gently he explained to me how impossible it was, speaking so simply that I quite understood what he meant me to see. And he promised me that, if I would learn now to be a dutiful son at home, and give my mind more to the studies I so hated, some day, when I was older, I could be with him and serve him.

"In a few years, Nigel," he concluded, "I shall return home. Then will I ask your father if you may come and stay with me sometimes. You shall be a playmate and elder brother to my two little sons. Will that content you?"

Content me! The very thought filled me with such joy as I had never known before. He bent down and kissed me as if I had been his own bairn; and I went to bed, longing to be a man, for had not the Earl promised me a future at his side? And my childish instinct told me that the young Earl of

Montrose would not forget a promise, neither would he break one.

Such was my first meeting with Montrose, and it is as clear and vivid as if of yesterday.

I was nearly nine when he came home. He was three-and-twenty, and—a man of the world, I was about to add, but that he never was. He had seen great sights, visited great cities, and discoursed with great men; yet, all the time, he had not forgotten me.

Well do I remember my first visit to Kincardine Castle. The Earl, having been abroad so long, was desirous of seeing many of his kinsmen, and my father, mine aunt and I, were bidden to a great Yule-tide gathering, the winter after his return. It took us two days to get there, and we tarried at a kinsman's house on our way. I had never been so far from home before, and enjoyed the journey immensely, not even a snowstorm for the last three hours coming—to me—much amiss. I remember my father's voice through the darkness and snow, "Yonder is the lodge! Cheer thee, good sister!"—for mine aunt could do naught but lament that she had ever left the sunny vales of England—as was her wont upon such occasions. I observed lights as my father spoke, and great iron gates opening before us. We rode up a long avenue, and so at last reached the house. I was feeling very cold and sleepy, but roused myself to gaze on those who came out to greet us, longing for sight of the Earl. Ere I could scramble from the saddle he came to my side, saying, "You are half frozen, laddie," and therewith lifted me

down, but did not set me on my feet till we were by the blazing hearth in the hall. As I stretched out my hands to the warm logs, feeling for the moment well-nigh dazed with the bright light and strange surroundings, I perceived, close by me, a little lad, and a maid of about mine own age.

"This is my niece, Lilias, Nigel," said the Earl, "and here is my little John. I trust ye will be good playmates."

He turned away to speak to my father and mine aunt, while we stared at one another as children will. Lilias Napier, after whom Aunt Lilias was called, was then a sprightful little maiden, with so great a love of mischief writ on her face that my heart warmed to her as to some kindred spirit. The boy was a full two years my junior, dark-eyed and dark-haired like his mother's people, the Carnegies, but in expression and manner oddly like his father. He was the first to speak now, and looking up at me he said,

"Will you come and see my new boat, Cousin Nigel? Bryce has made it for me, and I am going to sail it on the loch, when the ice melts."

I was very willing, so they each took a hand of me, and led me to a spacious chamber upstairs.

I had seldom had other children to play with, and I had never passed so joyful a Yule-tide in my life. It was there that I first saw my Lord Napier, Sir George Stirling of Keir, the Master of Maderty (who was betrothed to my lord's youngest sister, the Lady Beatrix), the Lairds of Claverhouse and Gorthie, and Killearn, and many others, whom I was to know



well in time to come. Mine uncle of Inchbraikie was there also—great uncle I should rather say, for he was my grandmother's brother-in-law. He had often been at Glenternie, and I loved him not, for he was stern by nature, and sharp of tongue. After his visits mine aunt would ever be encouraged to keep a tighter hand over me, and I know that both he and she thought my father to be very easy-going. Now I saw mine uncle in a new light. John—ay, and little James too, who was scarce three years old—would run freely to the Laird, having no fear of him, and I soon perceived how it was. Inchbraikie had been curator to Montrose during his youthhood, and the two bore to one another a great and amazing love, insomuch that Uncle Patrick was another man in my lord's presence, and ever exceeding loving and gentle to my lord and to his boys. There were young people at Kincardine, too—Archibald and Margaret Napier, the son of the Master of Claverhouse, and young Robin Graham of Killearn, the latter even then remarkable for his wondrous grace and beauty.

They were several years older than we little ones, and though they were kind in playing hide-and-seek and such like games with us, Lilias, John, and I were never more happy than when we were alone together. John's little brother was too small then to share in our pastimes. My only remembrance of him is that one evening we desired to let him over the stairs, with a rope about his body. Lilias urged with eloquence that wrought me to a mighty admiration, the enjoyment of being lowered into the hall beneath; but James was not convinced, and as John and I



secured the rope, he screamed so lustily that not only his nurse but the Countess herself (who seldom took much note of our doings) came flying to the rescue. She shook Lilias—knowing well the ringleader—and boxed my ears soundly—thoroughly deserved it was. After that episode we treated James as a precious thing, not to be lightly dealt with.

When, a month later, I returned home (Lilias having left the week before), John and I were inconsolable.

Seeing our real grief at parting, my father prayed the Earl to let the lad visit us ere long. This was permitted, and for the next six or seven years, I was frequently at Kincardine, and John at Glenternie, till he became dearer to me than a brother. When the Earl spent a few days at home while I was there, or came to Glenternie, my joy knew no bounds. So a few years passed swiftly and happily away, till, when I was in my twelfth year, my father died. And it chanced upon this wise.

CHAPTER II.

BOYHOOD.

THE Earl, in 1639, drew sword for the Covenant, as he then deemed right; for the King—in all good intention, I verily believe—had been exceeding high-handed in matters of religion with his Scottish people. In the spring my lord came from Edinburgh to Old Montrose, many noblemen and gentlemen being with him. He purposed to hold a conclave at Turriff in Aberdeenshire, with the Forbeses, and Frasers, and Crichtons, and other Covenanters of the north, and he summoned my father to join him.

So my father rode away from Glenternie with our old serving knave, and I never saw him again. When he reached Montrose, my lord had already left for the north—being always very sudden and unexpected in his movements. My father followed him to Turriff, and but a few miles from that place met a party of Gordons who, as you know, were Royalists ever. One was known to my father, and it appears that there was talk between them and high words. My dear father was easily roused, I know, when men spake lightly of what he held



most dear; and he was very ardent in what he believed to be the cause of freedom. Anon there were swords out, and, ere long, he fell mortally wounded. His opponent also was greviously hurt. Two of the Gordons helped old Burnbrae to convey the wounded men as far as Turriff. There died my father the day following, the Earl being with him. He spake no word, save once when he whispered,

"Will you be a father to Nigel?" And the Earl swore that he would fulfil his dying kinsman's request. Well and nobly did he keep his word!

Two days later, I had been fishing in the burn above Glenternie, and was about to return home when I observed a little party coming slowly down the glen. On a sudden, a horseman shot out from the rest and rode towards me. I recognised the Earl, and a great fear took hold of me. Laying down my basket and rod I ran to meet him. He drew rein and dismounted; then he laid his hand on my shoulder.

"I have somewhat to tell you, Nigel," he said, very gently—and I knew.

"Is he dead?" I asked, scarce knowing what I said; and the Earl told me all.

My father was buried that afternoon. I remember my lord and I sat alone together all the evening. He had requested mine aunt to excuse our company, knowing that I should be comforted somewhat by having him to myself. Aunt Catherine, indeed, drove me to distraction at this time, for she could never hold her peace on the matter, whereas I could in no wise bear to talk of it to her.

I prayed my lord very earnestly to take me home with him; but he said he was returning to Edinburgh at once; and, even if it were not so, it would not be right for me to leave Mistress Catherine just now, as she would miss her brother most sorely. Then did my lord gently show me that our grief should be a bond to draw me and mine aunt nearer together; and that, henceforth, I must be very dutiful to her. I promised him I would endeavour so to be. He spake to me also of the future, saying that he would arrange for me to have a tutor. All this time a question was on my lips, and at last I had it out.

"I pray you, sir," I said, "tell me when may I come to serve you. Never a day passes, but I think of the promise you made me when I was a babe."

He looked down at me with that bright sweet smile that ever made me feel I was his follower to the death, and said:

"If there is fighting, Nigel, you shall come with me when you are fifteen. Otherwise, you must finish your studies first. You shall go to St. Andrew's with John, and abroad too, if you like. Then I will find you work at my side."

We sat a long while silent, I on the deerskin at his feet, till Aunt Catherine must needs come fussing in to remind my lord it was nine of the clock, and that I should have been abed an hour since.

Next morning, the Earl was up at five, in the saddle, and away, while I stood at the door to see him go, as forlorn and miserable a little lad as you could have found in all Scotland. I had been my



dear father's constant companion. In the morning and evening he had taught me; in the afternoon we had walked or ridden together. I turned back into the house and went slowly up to mine own room. As I did so, I perceived Aunt Catherine was bustling in and out of the little chamber next mine, and Janet was carrying up a bundle of sticks. Well did I know what that meant—John was coming! It was just like my dear lord so to arrange matters.

The very next day did my friend arrive, and bided with us for a month, his tutor being with him and teaching us both. When he returned home my dominie had arrived—one Master William Blair, from Perth. He was young, active, and very kind to me; and as he knew and honoured my lord, I conceived a great liking for him.

I have lingered too long, I fear me, over these childish memories; yet one word more ere I come to speak of the years with my lord that are my only reason for writing these pages. Though the Earl had promised that I should go to him when I was fifteen I did not do so, for about 1642, there was a lull in the storm in our northern kingdom. It was not so in England; tidings reached us that the King had resolved to let the sword decide the question, and that a great battle had been fought near a place called Edgehill, between his forces and those of the Parliament.

"I intend, Nigel," said Montrose to me, one autumn morning in the library at Kincardine, "to go to Merchiston shortly, to take counsel with my Lord

Napier concerning these matters, and then, if need be, to England. The King is in sore danger, though he knoweth it not. He gave us all we fought for, and more; now should he have no subjects so grateful to him or so loyal as we Scottish folk; but men like Loudon and Warriston and, worst of all, that fox Argyll, seek not their King's and country's welfare, but their own power. And I am assured they will join themselves to these English rebels."

"But how can they, sir?" I cried. "There is no reason or excuse for such conduct."

"None—in the eyes of honest men," my lord made answer sadly. "But they will nevertheless do it, and when that day comes, may God help King Charles!" and for a space he mused in silence till the door opened and John entered. He laid a fishing basket and three rods down on the table, and then went to his father.

"You have not forgotten, sir, have you?" he said. "You promised us last night, you know."

"I will be ready in half an hour, my son," said my lord, smiling down at the bright face raised to his; the lad was the very apple of his eye. And John and I went off together, to secure necessary meat and drink to sustain us through a long day's fishing. We congratulated ourselves no little that we should have the Earl alone the livelong day. Too often on such occasions there would be mine uncle of Inchbraikie, or Sir George Stirling of Keir (who had lately wedded Lilias's elder sister, Margaret), or the Master of Maderty, or my Lord



Kilpont. And they would talk politics, and we would wish them at John o' Groats. So on this day we were filled with joy; and, indeed, it lives still in my mind as an exceeding pleasant memory. A walk of two or three miles took us to a place we wot of well, where we ever had good sport; and not till the sun was setting did we start home bearing our well-laden baskets.

Of late John and I had been reading Barbour's "Bruce," and the poems of Blind Harry, and our minds could dwell on little else save the War of Independence.

"My lord," said I, as we went along; "would you not fain have lived in the days of Wallace and Bruce?"

"Nay, Nigel," quoth he. "Rather would I live now. There will be brave deeds done anon, I doubt not, and war from here to Land's End as stern and deadly as ever was waged three hundred years syne."

"And much glory to be won, sir," cried John.

"True," said the Earl. "And I must have you both at my side, for the King will need every loyal sword in Scotland."

"I would that time were come," I said, and we all gazed on the moor, and peopled it with brave men fighting for country and King.

Ere we reached home we stood for some minutes by a little copse, watching the setting sun glinting through the firs.

"Do you think that we shall ever see them, sir?" asked John suddenly.

"Whom do you mean?" said his father.

"Wallace, sir, and Sir John the Graeme, and good King Robert, and the Black Douglas."

"And Sir Nigel Bruce," I put in, having no little affection for my gallant young namesake.

"Surely," my lord made answer, "shall we not come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the spirits of just men made perfect? And methinks, that after the vision of God Himself, nought shall give us greater joy than converse with those whose very names have been an inspiration to us."

"And the old Pagan heroes, sir," I asked, "what of them?"

"I am convinced, Nigel," he answered without hesitation, "that we shall see them also, and what a vision it will be! Think of them—giants of genius and intellect—Alexander, Cæsar, Hannibal; great minds like Plato and Aristotle, and Marcus Aurelius—men who sought after God if, haply, they might find Him. And, doubtless, they have found Him."

We walked on in silence, considering my lord's words, till we reached the garden and passed into it by a little wicket-gate. Then the Earl added earnestly,

"We must remember all we had that these great men of old had not. Unto us God hath revealed Himself far more clearly, and we have seen what perfectly pure heroic Humanity can be in the Christ. Let us see to it that we act accordingly, and that these heroes of Greece and Rome put us not to the blush by their greater virtue with their lesser know-



ledge of the truth. We say 'Noblesse oblige.' Christianity also obliges."

John and I gave ear readily. We loved to hearken when Montrose spoke thus; and, as I look back on my young days, I know I have to thank him for first turning my boyish thoughts to something beyond this world.

Of what passed that evening I must now state in brief. Naught would I say only I have heard men marvel why my lord wrote so little to his wife and spoke of her so seldom.

John and I had gone upstairs and were about to pass into our chamber (for we slept together), when we saw the Earl open the door of the Lady Magdalen's room at the end of the passage, and enter. On a sudden there followed loud angry tones, and then a clash as of swords. In two or three minutes the sounds ceased. We held our breath. The door was opened by my lord.

"Go!" we heard him say, in a voice ringing with scorn. "If you ever dare to venture under my roof again your life shall be the forfeit."

And out there came a dark handsome man, looking as a cur that has been whipped. His left arm hung limply at his side, and his face was very evil. He passed us; we watched him downstairs and across the hall. Then we went to the window-seat of our room and sat there, and we spoke no word.

"Who is he?" I asked at last.

"Sir Ian Campbell of Lochay," said John. "He cometh often. Oh, Nigel—my father——" and John laid his head against my shoulder and sobbed. I

comforted him as well as I could, and made him come down to the library, where supper was served when there were no visitors. We did not eat much, and soon returned to our room. Anon we heard a door open, and my lord went downstairs.

"John," said I, after a few minutes, "you must go to him."

The lad hesitated.

"Are you sure?" he said.

"Quite sure," I replied.

So he went, and I with him at his earnest request. We stood without the library door for a space, in some uncertainty. Then I boldly opened it, and signed to John to enter.

By the table sat the Earl, his plate and glass pushed back, his face hidden in his arms. The boy went to him, and, kneeling down, laid a hand on my lord's knee. Montrose looked up with a start.

"Father!" whispered John.

I watched my lord clasp the little lad in his arms and kiss him; then I stole away.

* * * * *

The next day the Earl left for Merchiston, that he might there take counsel with my Lord Napier, ere leaving for the south. We all accompanied him to the lodge; John, James, and I walked beside his horse. Robin was proudly mounted behind his father, and little David, who was but four years old, was securely seated in front, with his father's arm about him, shouting with glee as he waved the Earl's



whip. When we reached the gates we three elder boys ran forward and held them open for my lord and his attendants. Without, Montrose drew rein and called us to his side for a last word of farewell. Then we stood back, waiting till he should wave to us, as we knew he would, at the corner of the road. He paused at the turning and looked back. I fancied his eye fell with special love on John, who stood in the old gateway, with his little brother in his arms. My lord raised his hat; we all waved our caps; then he turned the corner, and was gone.

He was home some months later, for a short time; but I was at Glenternie, and when next I saw him he had a price on his head, and was outlawed by Argyll's government, yet with a commission in his pocket to raise loyal Scotland on behalf of our sovereign lord, King Charles.

CHAPTER III.

WITH THE GREAT MARQUIS.

ONE morning late in August, 1644, I had settled myself on the crags above our house with a history of Sir John Mandeville's travels, which I had carried off from Kincardine some weeks before. My dominie had gone to Perth to see his mother, who was sick; mine aunt was busy making preserves, and I was mine own master for the day. I did not read much, for I was thinking of the Earl, whom I had not seen for nearly two years. We knew that he had been at Oxford in the spring, still warning the King of danger from the north. But both King and Queen had turned a deaf ear, till over the Border came a great Scottish army under Leslie to aid the English rebels. Then did His Majesty realise that he had his back to the wall, and at last he gave the commission to Montrose that, given a year earlier, might have saved the war. We had heard in July that the Earl had raised a troop in the North of England, and not a word since then had reached us. The earth



might have opened and swallowed him for aught we knew.

As I sat on the heather I heard a sound of hoofs on the pathway above me. I deemed the rider must be coming to Glenternie, and I scrambled hastily up the cliff just in time to stop him. It was the Laird of Inchbraikie's servant, and I, thinking doubtless he had merely brought me an invite to Tullibelton, opened the missive he handed me leisurely enough. I have that letter still. It lies before me, old, yellow and torn. I will copy it here, for it gave me my heart's desire:

"TULLIBELTON,

"This 25th day of August, 1644.

"For the hand of the Laird of Glenternie these.

"NIGEL,

"I pray you hold yourself in readiness to join me at Blair, at a day's warning, with all the men you can bring from your village. The King's Standard will be raised in Athole, God willing, ere the month be out.

"Your affectionate Kinsman,

"MONTROSE."

I eagerly questioned Angus of the matter, and learned that after Marston Moor, Prince Rupert had required of my lord his little troop, and had bidden him return to Oxford, as no men could be spared to make a diversion in Scotland. Then

did my lord's spirit rise superior to this calamity, and disguised as a serving-man in attendance on the Laird of Duncruib, he had passed through the Lowlands undiscovered. He had been in hiding near Tullibelton for some weeks, hoping to raise a small army among his own kinsmen and friends and among the Highlanders, who, though they cared not for questions of King and kirk, hated Argyll very bitterly. My lord had waited only for the Irish recruits promised him by the Earl of Antrim; and now he had heard of their approach and was sending to bid them meet him at Blair.

I could hardly believe that the hour had come and I was in truth to go to the wars with my lord. I hastened home and imparted the news to Aunt Catherine; and hardly tarrying to see the effect on her, I saddled my nag, and went down to the village. I was able to satisfy myself that I could take my lord some eight or nine stout knaves; and as I went also to outlying farms and to a shepherd's hut some miles away, it was evening ere I returned home.

Mine aunt was seated in the hall, darning my hose, with a goodly pile of my garments set out on the table before her. She summoned me to her and forthwith made it clear to me that having done her duty for nigh on sixteen years in this outlandish place, she was going to return before winter set in to the peaceful fields and homesteads of merry England. In vain I urged that they were far from peaceful just at present, and that if she



would bide at Glenternie till she could go south in the wake of our victorious army, her journey would be secure instead of being fraught with every imaginable danger. But she was not to be daunted. She set forth attended by the serving-man and maid who had come with her sixteen years before, and she, who would not pass a cow unprotected, returned through perils of war to her native land; and more, as I learnt later, arrived in safety—probably because she cared, as she frequently averred, "not a jot for all the Kings and Covenants and Parliaments in the world."

My lord was greatly entertained when I told him at Blair of mine aunt's resolve, and bade me have no fears for her, for who would molest an elderly dame of no political opinions? I learnt then also that he never could abide her, but that he had been too wise a friend to let me know that, till Mistress Catherine had turned her back for ever on Glenternie.

It was the last day of August when, at the command of the Earl—of the Marquis, I should now say—I rode to Blair Athole with my men. As we neared the Castle I perceived the Royal Standard already flying, and my lord mingling in the crowd of chiefs and lairds and wild-looking Irishmen.

As I waited for speech of him, mine uncle of Inchbraikie came by with his friend, the Tutor of Strowan. He told me where to quarter my men, and afterwards bade me go up to the Castle, where I found my lord. Ah! I would you could have seen him, for verily there was no such man



in all broad Scotland! He bade me follow him, and we entered the room which was to serve him as a bed-chamber that night.

"Nigel," quoth he, "I have somewhat to ask you," and he sat down at a table as he spoke. "Shall I herewith write you a commission in Inchbraikie's regiment as cornet, or——?" and he looked at me with keen, swift glance.

"Or, sir——?" I cried eagerly.

"Or," pursued my lord, "will you be in personal attendance upon me? Consider ere you decide that it may mean you will have fewer opportunities of distinguishing yourself; you will have less leisure; you will, as a rule, be far more in the position of page than of aide-de-camp, and must needs be ready to turn your hand to aught I ask you to do."

"My lord," I cried, nothing daunted, "I would a thousand times rather give you my personal service.

Then my lord accepted my service in his own gracious way, and was good enough to assure me that he rejoiced to have me at his side.

Happy indeed were the first months of the campaign. Despite three armies in the field against us, all far outnumbering us, we were victorious wherever we went. On the first Sabbath in September we met Lord Elcho's troops barring the way to Perth, eight thousand men fully armed, with cannon to boot. We were but three thousand, with few fire-arms, one round of ammunition apiece; many of the clansmen had only bows and arrows, some others were but armed with stones. But then



we had a General, who was a host in himself. My lord led the Athole men on foot, with target and pike, and charged the strongest Covenanting regiment, under Sir James Scott. Mine uncle was close behind him, and so was I. It was a tough fight for a space; then the rebel line wavered and broke, and there followed a great flight to Perth, which we entered that evening.

The next few days we lodged there in much comfort, at the house of one Margaret Donaldson; but the Irishmen and many of the Highlanders were quartered without the city, for they knew no mercy to a fallen foe.

While we were at Perth, John, and James too, joined us at my lord's desire; and the Marquis found that there was in the city his old dominie, Master William Forrett, and forthwith prayed him to join us as his purse-bearer, and to have a care of the boys. It was the very evening we arrived when I, idling at the door, saw the old man approach—of venerable aspect, with silver-headed cane, and book in hand. He inquired of me if my lord was within, and asked to see him in a voice which trembled with eagerness. I ran in, and found Montrose closeted with my Lord Kilpont, Strowan, and Colkitto, and I whispered mine errand in his ear.

"Forrett!" he cried, and rose at once. "Your pardon, gentlemen, will you excuse me for a few minutes?" and therewith he followed me down. It was pleasant to watch the two meet. Master Forrett well nigh embraced his old scholar, and my lord manifested a singular affection and regard for



him, and began at once urging him to come with us. Later, James was sent home, for my lord felt that the sights—let alone the fatigues—of Highland warfare were not fitting for a lad of his tender years. So he went back to Old Montrose with Master Forrett, and neither he nor the dominie ever saw my lord again.

How much John's company added to my happiness at this time I need hardly say. Uncle Patrick fairly doted on the lad, and was never heard to say a sharp word to him; and you have heard enough of the old Laird to know what that means. In truth, John endeared himself to all, and I verily believe that there was not a man in our little army who would not have died to save the boy's life.

Before the winter set in, we had crushed another Covenanting army at the Brigg of Dee, and given Argyll good taste of our metal at Fyvie. But by November few Lowland gentlemen would tarry with us, and my Lord Duplin, Sir John Drummond, and others said farewell, and retired to their homes for the next few months, having no mind for campaigning in Highland snows. Anon Argyll also withdrew to his winter quarters at Inverary, where he boasted of his security behind his snow-clad mountains. But my lord had still with him the Highlanders, most of his gallant Grahams, and the good old Earl of Airlie with his Ogilvies, and we cared not a jot for all the cold and hardship in the world. The clansmen were very bitter against Argyll, especially the MacDonalds and the Ogilvies, for they could not forget how, in the

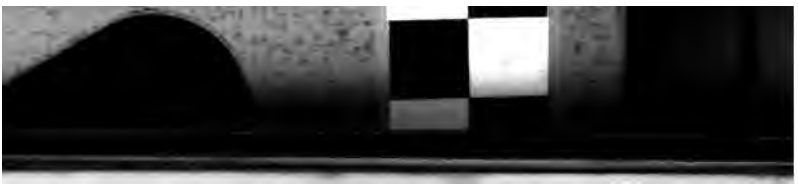


Bishop's war, he had harried, unprovoked, both Airlie and the MacDonald country. Besides, did not there lie at his door all the blame for this present unwarrantable rebellion against the King's Majesty, and the invasion of England?

So we set forth in December to surprise the Campbells in their own lair. Guided only by cowherds, we struggled through deep defiles, and swept down on Argyllshire. There was a long score to be wiped off, but it was done. We laid the country waste to the very walls of Inverary, whence Argyll fled in terror to Roseneath.

You may remember I mentioned the name of my Lord Kilpont in speaking of our occupation of Perth. He was a gallant young gentleman of great parts, and very dear unto my lord. Shortly after we left Perth he was foully murdered by an agent of Argyll's, because he would not join in a plot to assassinate Montrose. The murderer escaped to the Covenanters, by whom he was highly rewarded. At this time Argyll was offering a great sum, not merely to him who should take my lord prisoner, but to whomsoever should assassinate him! No wonder that we hated the Campbells with a bitter hatred and spared them not.

One day during our march we came to a poor hamlet, where we halted for the night. The inhabitants had already fled. We planted the Standard outside the largest hovel—it was hardly more—and my lord bade me find John, as he desired speech of him. I discovered him anon, in



another hut, lighting a fire, if you please, for some frost-bitten Irishmen, who were too cold and wretched to do anything for themselves. He rose to come, and then leant back against the wall, coughing. I looked at him in alarm.

"It is naught," he said cheerfully as soon as he could speak, and ran off through the snow.

I had heard him cough for a week or two past, but never like that. I stopped to speak to Captain O'Keene, a young Irish officer of very reckless courage and a most gay humour; then my Lord of Airlie passed, and gave me a message for the General. So I went back to my lord's hut, and entering it, perceived him seated on a rough stool by the fire. John was kneeling beside him, his face raised pleadingly to his father's.

"No, my son," the Marquis was saying, "I cannot —cannot allow it; you must go back—if not home, then at least to Blair Athole. You are not strong enough for such work as this. I was wrong to let you come. I am going to send you back to-morrow with the Master of Gorthie and a small company."

I was smitten dumb with dismay, and John's voice was very uncertain as he said:

"But in the summer, sir, when—when you go to England?"

"I hope," said my lord, "that then you will be well and strong enough to come. I may seem hard, my dear lad, and, perchance to your mind, unreasonable in thus sending you away, but I cannot lose my son needlessly, even in the King's service. —Yes, Nigel."



With the Great Marquis.

I gave Airlie's message and withdrew. Later I sought my lord, and found him alone.

"I pray you, sir," I said, "give me leave to go back to Blair with John."

"Will you indeed, Nigel?" he asked eagerly. "I deemed it were scarce fair to ask you, but if you will I shall be exceeding grateful."

Thus it was that I rode forth on the morrow with my friend, and we both missed the glories of Inverlochy. I cannot say that I never regretted my choice. It was hard not to have taken part in crushing the Campbells, nor to have witnessed Argyll's dastardly flight—he was rowed away to a shameful safety, heedless of the cries of his drowning kinsmen—but I was sustained by the thought that my lord was pleased with me, and that John was marvellously glad of my company.

We were cheered somewhat by the presence of the Master of Gorthie, for we both liked him greatly. He had been page to my lord in his boyhood, and though he was by nature a very quiet and silent man—(showing therein a marked contrast to the Laird, his father, who was a very splendid person and of a most jovial temper)—he exerted himself on this occasion to amuse us, and kept us merry with tales of all Montrose and he had done when they were boys together. We were sorry to part with him at Blair, where he left us in charge of the Laird of Inver, who was in command of the garrison and of our prisoners.

We bided very quietly at Blair for about three weeks, reading much, talking much, and going out

now and then for a short ride, but never far, for John grew tired at once. Towards the end of February we received a summons to Elgin to meet my lord, if John were equal to the journey. He certainly looked better for the rest, and so, travelling by easy stages, we joined my lord, who had sent for us, it appeared, because he hoped to find in Aberdeenshire some learned leech to consult about John.

We found he had been joined by my Lord Gordon, who was son to the Marquis of Huntly and nephew to Argyll, whom he loathed very bitterly. He became from the outset singularly devoted to my lord, whom he well nigh worshipped, while Montrose, on his side, conceived a great love for the young man, and a very deep and warm friendship sprang up between them. So it came to pass that we halted a night at Gordon Castle, from which Huntly had fled, and my Lord Gordon did the honours of the place.

John had ridden a considerable distance that day, and I remarked to myself with satisfaction how well he was looking nevertheless. He had a good colour and his eyes were bright, so that I was half surprised when my lord sent him upstairs at once to lie down, signing to me to go with him, and saying that he would come up anon.

We were just mounting the staircase when John stopped, grasped the rail, and would have fallen; but there was a quick step behind us, and in a minute my lord had lifted the lad in his arms as if he were a babe—for he was terribly light.



"I hear there is a leech among Huntly's servants. Go for him!" and I ran.

Ten minutes later I stood by the window in my lord's room, while the leech examined his patient. An indescribable fear came over me, and I knew not whether I should stay, yet I could not go. At length the old man shook his head, and then walked with my lord to some little distance from the bed.

"I pray you hide naught from me," said Montrose. "I would fain know the worst."

"I will disguise naught from your Excellency," was the reply. "He has a fever—with no strength to fight against it. He is not like to see another week."

And it was Friday.

I know not quite what passed after that. All seemed dark for a space. Then I heard my lord say:

"Where is Patrick?"

I left the room as one in a dream, and stumbled against mine uncle on the stairs. He did not curse at me for clumsiness. I dimly wondered why. Afterwards I learned that he had just met the leech.

"John is dying," I said hoarsely. "My lord wants you."

And I turned away down to the hall and through the grounds to a breezy moor. For a mile I ran, till I was out of sight and sound of the camp. Then I threw myself on the heather and wept—I am not ashamed to say it—till I could weep no more.



It seemed so hard that God should take him from us so soon. He was only fifteen. And to die like this—not even in battle. I hardly dared to think of the blank his loss would make in my life, and as for my lord, my heart ached for him.

It was dusk when I rose to my feet and went back to the Castle. I passed Montrose in the hall. He was about to go out and place the sentries, which he always did himself. I heard him say to Colkitto, "We shall leave on Monday at the latest." It sent a chill to my heart as I realised whom we should leave behind.

Then my lord perceived me and stopped.

"Nigel," he said, "will you go up to him? He has been asking for you."

I needed no second bidding, and was soon at my friend's bedside. Now as I gazed at him wistfully with eyes opened, I could not doubt that the doctor was right.

"Come nearer to me, Nigel," he whispered, for both Inchbraikie and the leech were in the room; and I did so.

"Promise me," he said earnestly, "that you will always live with my father—at any rate, till James is old enough. He will not miss me if you are there."

I shook my head, but John went on:

"And I shall like to think of you always being with him."

So I promised I would, and he spoke little more.

In half an hour my lord came back, and the boy, who had hardly taken his eyes off the door, welcomed



him with an eager smile. Inchbraikie and the leech retired to the ante-chamber, and the Laird sent anyone wanting Montrose sharply about his business. I would have gone also, but John stretched out a hand to me, saying, "Prithee, stay Nigel." So I stayed, keeping up the fire and making myself useful as best I could.

The next morning my lord had perforce to be out for some little time, for not even on such an occasion could he leave everything to his officers; but I saw it was all he could do to go. John was very restless when his father was not there, and asked for him continually, so that I was thankful when my lord returned.

The afternoon wore away. Once the lad spoke.

"I meant to die in battle for the King, sir," he said. "But it is for the King, is it not?"

I did not catch my lord's reply, but I saw that John was satisfied. He had rambled a great deal in the night, but now his head was clear, and he lay very quiet and still.

It was beginning to grow dark, and I was thinking of going for the lamp, when I heard him whisper "Father!" My lord bent down and held him in his arms. Then a few minutes later Montrose kissed the lad's brow, and laid him back on the pillow.

Half stupefied I sat on by the fire, I know not how long, till the door opened softly, and mine uncle looked in. He glanced at my lord, who knelt by the bed, and signed to me. I went out.

"You loon," he said, yet kindly enough, as he

shut the door. "Can you not leave him to himself now?"

As he spoke, the outer door of the ante-chamber opened, and in came Colonel Nathaniel Gordon, and Colkitto, and Sir David Ogilvy.

"What the de'il are ye wanting now, gentlemen?" demanded Inchbraikie fiercely. "The bairn's gone. May he not be left in peace for once?"

Ere they could reply, out came my lord. I could scarce bear to look at him, for his face was exceeding stern and pale and all the merry look had gone from his eyes.

"Good evening, my friends," he said. "We will go the round of the sentries now. You will excuse me to-night, I know, if I have kept you a few minutes."

As they left the room, he turned to me and laid a hand on my shoulder, while his tone was of the gentlest.

"Go to bed, lad, now," he said. "You were awake all last night."

On the Sabbath Lord Graham was buried—not where gallant Grahams sleep their last sleep at Auchterarder, but in the little kirkyard at Bellie. On the Monday we left. At the turn of the road, I noted how my lord cast a long glance over his shoulder at the low grey wall of the kirk. Then he turned to Inchbraikie, who rode at his side, with a brave smile.

"I have given my best for the King, Patrick," he said, "and God knows I do not grudge it."



CHAPTER IV.

DESPATCHES FOR THE KING.

A WEEK or two later, when we were still in Aberdeenshire, I was returning from a bathe with Robin Graham of Killearn and David Guthrie, when I was met by my lord's young knave, Rudolf (an orphan lad whom he had brought with him from Germany as a bairn), who told me I was wanted by Montrose. I made my way up the hill to some grey crags, where I found my lord seated with Glengarry, Colkitto, my young Lord Gordon, and some other officers gathered about him.

"Here is the callant," quoth Inchbraikie. "I doubt me if he is not too young and feckless, James."

"Come hither, Glenternie," said my lord, and I augured a matter of high import, for otherwise, unless I had vexed him very sorely, he would never have called me 'Glenternie.'

"I am seeking someone I can trust," pursued Montrose, "to carry despatches to the King. I cannot spare an officer, and yet it behoves me to

send someone on whom I can rely—who is not only brave, but discreet and resourceful."

"Oh, sir," I cried, as I discerned his meaning, "will you so trust me?"

Here mine uncle growled somewhat in my lord's ear, of which I could only catch the word "prudence."

"I have never had overmuch of that myself, have I, Patrick?" returned my lord. "At least the rebels will not catch Nigel napping, I'll warrant. And remember his Scottish speech will not bewray him—thanks to Mistress Catherine. I think, my friends, we will send the lad. Come with me, Nigel."

He slipped his arm into mine, and we walked slowly down to the river, and then along the bank, while he instructed me fully as to all I should tell the King, and how I should bear myself at the English court, and how I must guard the despatches with my life.

"I would not send you," he concluded, "but that it is so difficult to find a competent messenger, and it would only be selfish of me to keep you at my side because I do not want to lose you. I cannot tell you, dear lad, all you have been to me lately; but this is such a journey as I think will be good for you in many ways."

I knew what he meant. Only he, to whom the loss was still keener, could guess how much I missed my friend, day by day and hour by hour. There was no one to take his place. All my kinsmen were older than I, and they treated me as a mere boy; whereas I, being seventeen and a half, considered myself a man, and resented it accordingly. The



Despatches for the King.

Laird of Killearn's son was particularly kind to me, though he was four or five years my senior. But my lord had expressly forbidden me to be much with Robin, for the Killearns were Papists, and then of all the intemperate young swashbucklers of our camp, Robin Graham of Killearn was second to none. His own father would hardly speak to him, and my lord was the only man who had the slightest influence for good over him. Despite all this he had great charm of manner, much kindness of heart, and was the handsomest man it has ever been my lot to look on. He always seem to me like Esau in Holy Writ—very attractive at first sight, albeit a profane person. It happened he had been most anxious to be sent to England with the despatches, and my lord had said to him in a very straight manner:

"I would trust you with the despatches, Robin, but not as my envoy at the English court."

The next day I set forth with my lord's letter sewn up in the lining of my breeks. He walked with me to the outskirts of the camp, and I promised him that my courage should not outrun my discretion, and that I would bear myself very modestly at the court. As I mounted Gipsy, my lord said,

"Keep her as long as you can. But remember to take to your feet, and disguise yourself, if necessary."

Then he held out his hand and shook mine warmly, and with a "Farewell, my boy. Take care of yourself. God bless you!" he returned, while I set my face to the south.

I knew the country before me fairly well, and I kept carefully to those parts peopled by friendly



clans—Farquharsons, Robertsons, Murrays, and Grahams. Sir John Hurry was too much to the east, and Argyll to the west, for my ride to be fraught with much danger at first. It was not till I had left Stirling behind that I was really in the enemy's country, where every village owned the sway of "King Campbell," and every castle flew the blue banner of the Covenant. I lay in hiding during most of the daytime, and rode at night, trusting to Gipsy's sagacity to pick her way over rough track and boggy moor. I obtained food at outlying farms and cottages, and in six days' time reached the border without mishap.

At a small village at the foot of the Cheviots, I fell in with an honest English smith, who gave me supper, breakfast, and a bed for naught, because his laddie was away fighting for the King. He shod Gipsy, moreover, supplied me with food, and sent me on my way rejoicing.

Three days later, as twilight was coming on, I was riding down a country lane when I heard a sound of horses' hoofs. I drew rein and hearkened. They were approaching rapidly. On my right was a gate. I opened it and led my mare into a field. At a word from me she lay down behind the hedge, and I knelt beside her, peering through the thick foliage. Soon I heard the jangle of swords and spurs, and anon a troop of cavalry swept by at a sharp trot. So engrossed was I in watching them, that not till the last steel cap had disappeared did I rise and turn round, to see a boy of about mine own age crossing the field towards me. He was short and slight, with



such a pleasant face, that I thought I might well ask him where I could get some food.

"Are you for the King?" he asked, and I knew by the tone in which he said "the King" that I could speak openly to him.

"I am," I answered; "and if you can tell me which is the best road for Oxford, and where I can get some supper, I shall be truly grateful."

"Of a surety I can, and will do both," he replied eagerly. "Would that I could offer you a night's lodging, but I may not. My father, Colonel Warden, is in command of the Roundhead troop, which has just passed."

"Then wherefore——?" I began.

"You would ask why I am not with him," said the lad; "and why I am glad to do anything for you. My father was a friend of Mr. Hampden's, and he thinks the King is at fault, and that the liberties of England are at stake. I have studied the question too, and have talked much with Guy about it. (Guy is my cousin. He is a Royalist, and aide-de-camp to my Lord Hopton.) I am no Puritan, nor is my mother, and I desire to fight for Church and King. Last year my father would fain have taken me to the war with him, but I would not go, and I told him wherefore. So I am to bide at home till I am of age, and then I am either to enter his regiment, or—or——"

The boy's face was very sad as he looked across the field to where I could see an old house in the midst of a wooded garden.

"Or——" I asked.

"Or else," he said simply, "he will disinherit me. He will not own a Cavalier son. But I hope the war will be over before I am of age. And now I have told you all this so that you may trust me. My mother has promised my father not to shelter a Cavalier in the house, but she will give you food, and do aught she can for you, for Guy's sake. And I know where you can safely spend the night."

I took Gipsy's bridle and followed him. So these English knew what loyalty was, and my heart warmed to this boy, whose allegiance was costing him so dear. He led me into the garden, and on entering, I saw a summer-house.

"Tether your horse to that tree," he said. "I will bring you both some food. You will be quite safe in the summer-house, for the gardener has done his work, and my sisters are within."

He ran off, and I was glad to sit down and rest, very thankful to have fallen into such loyal and hospitable hands. Some little time after I heard steps approaching, and looking out cautiously, I beheld a lady, still young-looking, and of a very gracious countenance, coming down the path. She bore a dish in her hands, whereon was a pie of most magnificent proportions. I confess I was fairly enraptured at the sight. Behind her was my young host with a lantern and a bag, at which Gipsy sniffed with much satisfaction.

Mistress Warden proved to be very pleasant and friendly, but after some little converse she said:

"Now you must have your supper, and I must bid



you good night and farewell. Geoffrey will bring you a cushion and a rug, and see you on your way to-morrow."

"A thousand thanks, madam," I said, "for all your kindness."

"I would I could offer you more," she said, and so left us.

Young Warden and I talked on for some time, and with difficulty I refrained from telling him on what errand I was going to Oxford; but I had resolved that not to the most guileless-looking person I met would I reveal from whom I came and to whom I went. After a while he went indoors and brought me a pillow and a rug.

"I am going to keep watch," he announced.

"Surely there is no need," I said; but he prayed me to let him, as it was doing something for the King; and I believe he kept awake all night.

On the morrow we rose before the sun, and he took me far on my way till there were but forty or fifty miles left between me and Oxford. There was something so wistful in his face as we parted, that I threw my resolve to the winds, and could not help saying,

"You have done more for the King than you wot of, Warden. I am carrying important despatches to His Majesty," and the lad's face as he left me was a sight to see.

The next day I rode into Oxford—as fair a city as I ever beheld. I had just announced mine errand to the soldier, who challenged me at the gate, when up came the captain of the city guard, a tall man of



soldierly aspect. The sentinel stepped back, saluting, and I turned to the officer.

"Is the King in Oxford now, sir?" I asked.

"He is."

"Then I desire to see him, sir," I made answer. "I bring despatches to His Majesty from the Marquis of Montrose."

Doubtless I was fully aware of mine own supreme importance as I made this announcement. The officer's lips curled slightly in contempt or amusement, but he said civilly enough:

"Will you be pleased to follow me, young sir?" and led the way along a broad handsome street, which I think they called St. Giles's. He was evidently a silent man, but seeing I was well-nigh bursting with desire for information, he was good enough to point out several famous Cavaliers whom we passed. Among others was my Lord Hopton on horseback, with two officers in attendance. I wondered whether either of them were Geoffrey Warden's kinsman.

"A very gallant gentleman," observed my companion. "I was on his staff till lately."

Then came Sir Philip Warwick, the King's secretary, in deep converse with Bishop Taylor, of whom I have since heard as a good and holy man. Ere long we passed before a college, where the entrance was shaded with trees, under which several young gentlemen were idling and talking. My guide stopped.

"Is the King still here, Mr. Ashburnham?" he asked, addressing himself to an effeminate-looking young fop.



The youth nodded and yawned.

"Will you take this young gentleman to him, then?" said the officer. "He brings despatches from Scotland."

Mr. Ashburnham nodded again.

"You can leave him with me, Colonel Hewitt," he said; and after surveying me as if I were a prize-bullock, which I thought showed much ill-breeding and want of courtesy, he strolled off through the gateway and across the quadrangle, I following, not overmuch taken with English manners.

We passed through the second archway, and came into a beautiful garden. At the further end of it was the high wall of the city, and several soldiers were on guard. To our right, in a well-sheltered bower, two gentlemen were sitting, talking. Several others were standing about on the lawn. I followed Mr. Ashburnham to the little arbour, where he announced me with a magnificent bow. My heart beat fast as I also bowed low, and then raised mine eyes to the King's face. He had been in converse with his chaplain, Mr. Hudson, but as I approached he looked up, smiled on me very graciously, and said:

"You bring me what I much desire, sir."

Then I presented my lord's letter on one knee, which he took and read, while I, who had stepped back, made note of his delicate refined face and mournful eyes. In a few minutes he folded up the letter.

"The news from Scotland is distinctly good, my friends," he said. "My Lords Gordon and Seaforth

have joined Montrose, and he has every hope of meeting us on the border in the summer. But I understand," turning to me, "that I may refer to you for more details, so we will walk back to Merton together."

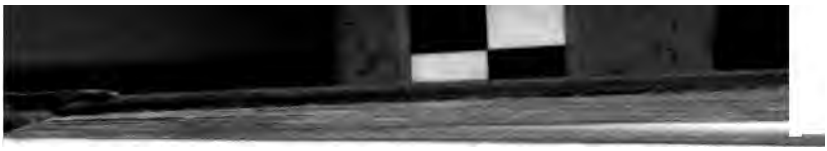
Much honoured and elated I thus quitted St. John's at the King's side, and passed the young courtiers outside with inward satisfaction, for I was almost sure they had been jesting among themselves at my home-made garments and country air, and I longed to have a wrestling bout with them, or a round with foils. I trow I would have taught them a thing or two. As it was, I was content that they should see me in such deep converse with His Majesty, that it appeared I did not so much as observe them.

By the time we had reached Merton I had given the King all the military information he desired. He did not, however, dismiss me, but bidding me follow him, went down a corridor till he paused at a door before which hung a velvet curtain embroidered with the royal arms. A page drew it back, opened the door, and we passed within to a pleasant sunny chamber.

King Charles sat down and signed to me to do the same, whereupon I did so—humbly, upon a carven stool, and thus awaited His Majesty's pleasure.

"I understand," he began, "that you are kinsman to my Lord Marquis?"

Hitherto I had been very shy, but when it came to talking personally of my chief, then my tongue was loosed, and I spake freely.



"In truth I am, sire," I replied. "He is my guardian too; and since my father died hath been everything to me."

"Poor lad!" quoth the King kindly, "didst lose thy father in the war?"

Then I coloured and wished I had said less, but had perforce to tell him.

"He fell in the Bishops' War; so please your Majesty."

My hesitation told him on which side, and for a moment he frowned. Then his countenance cleared, and he observed that if all rebels had loved King and country as did Montrose and his friends, he would be the happiest Prince in Christendom. At this I answered boldly, that I was sure His Majesty had no subject more devoted to him, heart and soul, than Montrose.

He answered:

"Yea, boy, I know it," and then gazed out of the window for a space in silence.

I wondered if he were thinking of all the brave men who counted their lives cheap for his sake, both north of the Tweed and south; and as I watched him my whole soul went out to him. At first I confess I had been somewhat disappointed. I had looked for a strong, vigorous personality, and there was none. Life had been very hard to the King—I could see that. Few men could be so unfitted to bear the brunt of the storm as he. Kingly as he looked, there was a certain helplessness about him, and doubtless it was just that which appealed to my lord and roused in him so passionate a devotion.

But my musings were interrupted. The King turned to me and spake.

"I desire to send a letter to my Lord Montrose when you return. Can you be ready to start on Monday?"

"I can start this minute, if your Majesty wishes," I made answer; "though I doubt not my horse will be glad of two days' rest."

The King looked rather amused.

"You Scottish Cavaliers know only one time," he said, "and that is 'at once.' But Monday morning will suit me well."

He touched a silver bell which was on the table, and Mr. Ashburnham appeared. As he opened the door a greyhound thrust its nose in and then bounded to the King's side.

"I wish to speak to Captain Beverley," said the King.

Mr. Ashburnham withdrew, and anon there was a knock, and a young man entered. He was tall and stalwart, with short, yellow curls, and eyes as blue as a Scottish loch. His countenance was very pleasing to me, so that I was glad when the King said,

"This young gentleman hath brought despatches from Scotland, Captain Beverley. You will please to find him a lodging as he remains here till Monday."

The Englishman bowed, so did I, and we left the royal presence. He told me as we went down the corridor that he was lodging at the King's Head, and that he could get me a room there if it would suit me. I explained that it was my first visit to



Oxford, and that it was all the same to me where I lodged. He took me, therefore, into the High Street to a very good hostelry, and ordered supper for us both at five. He then excused himself from my company, as he was on duty at Merton till that hour.

Left to my own devices I wandered about the city. Except for Perth it was the only one in which I had ever been, and for the best part of an hour I gazed and marvelled to my heart's content. After some time I came to a little shop in a side street, full of books within and without, for there was a shelf outside the window, and by the door sat an aged man, peering through spectacles at a musty tome. I could in no wise keep my hands off the books, and taking up the first I opened it at random. Mine eyes fell on these words:

> "For Lycidas is dead—dead ere his prime,
> Young Lycidas, and hath not left a peer."

I sat me down on the edge of the shelf and read on to the end. Then I rose and asked the old knave what the price might be. He charged me a crown, and I paid him gladly, slender though my purse was, for I knew my lord would love these poems, and I was resolved to take them home as a present to him.

I sped back to the King's Head hugging the little volume for very joy. There I shut myself into my chamber and read on and on. A knock at my door interrupted me in "Comus," and announced Captain

Beverley. I descended with him to supper, and soon found that his face did not belie him. He was as honest, simple, and unassuming as he looked, and withal as true a gentleman as it hath ever been my lot to meet.

The day following was the Sabbath. It was strangely pleasant to hear the bells ring and to set forth to the kirk as in the old days before the war.

"I always go to the cathedral," said Beverley, so to Christchurch we went. I had not been to worship since I had stood in the little bare kirk at Bellie, and my thoughts involuntarily went back to it, despite the contrast, as I followed my companion up the aisle and gazed wonderingly at the beauteous carving and lofty roof. Then there rushed upon me the words I had been reading—

> "Storied windows richly dight,
> Casting a dim religious light."

I am an old man now, and I have never seen Oxford since I spent there those two happy days, four-and-forty years ago, but I can never read "Il Penseroso" even now without there arising before me a vision of Christchurch Cathedral.

In the afternoon Beverley proposed a walk, and we went to Magdalen, at which college he told me he had been five or six years ago. We went through the college gardens to the river, and stretched ourselves upon the bank in the mild spring afternoon. He spoke of Oxford in a very loving fashion; it all



seemed most dear unto him, and I learnt that his home was not a dozen miles away. Then I guided our talk to poesy. I had been too shy before to tell him of my new-found treasure; and we spake much of Spenser and Will Shakespeare. At length I drew the little volume from my pocket, and said:

"Know you aught of Mr. John Milton, who hath writ some wondrous lines?"

"I have heard of him ofttimes," quoth the young Englishman. "He is a Puritan, but I believe he wrote some poems several years ago that are not much tainted with his opinions."

"Puritan or not," I cried, "there hath been no such poet since Master Shakespeare, I'll be sworn. Hearken to this," and I read while he gave ear.

"Read on," quoth he, when I paused, and so I did, while we lay in the long grass and heard no sound save the murmur of the river. Anon I came to "Lycidas," and being fain to pass it without his remarking, began to turn the leaves over softly.

"Nay, I pray you, miss naught," said Beverley.

So I essayed to read, but the tears blinded mine eyes. I handed him the book, and bade him continue if he would, but that I could read no more. He looked at me curiously yet kindly, and after a minute's hesitation, prayed me to tell him the cause of my grief, unless it would pain me. So I told him of the matter, and he spake to me words of brotherly cheer and comfort, so that when we walked back to evensong at Christchurch, I felt happier than I had done since John's death. No one has ever held the place in my heart Lord Graham held and still holds;

but I felt I had found a friend, and I was no little moved by Ralph Beverley's quiet courteous sympathy to me, a stranger and a Scot.

The next morning I waited on the King, who received me most graciously. He told me he was entrusting me with important despatches, and he gave me his hand to kiss, wishing me good speed on my journey. Then I withdrew. I never saw him again.

When the news came to us at Brussels of his shameful murder four years later, I recalled those two brief interviews at Oxford; and I remember how he struck me as lacking in all that maketh a great ruler. Yet I would we had him now, with his quiet dignity and pure, good life. He was a man to love and honour. Would that we could say the same of his sons!

Ralph Beverley rode with me to the city gate, and there we said farewell, and promised each other that, when the war was over, visits should be exchanged between Glenternie and Beverley Hall. So I set out for the north, hoping that we should meet again, but never dreaming of our being brothers-in-arms or of what ties should bind us together.



CHAPTER V.

BREAD UPON THE WATERS.

THE first part of my journey proved uneventful. The weather was fine and my spirits were high. I reflected with pardonable pride that I had performed my mission with a discretion which well became my youthful years. Many a wiser and older man than I had been kidnapped on this long and dangerous ride. Some days after leaving Oxford I crossed the ill-fated field of Marston Moor. Ah, that my lord had been there with his prompt action and brilliant strategy! Then, surely the North of England had not been lost for King Charles.

As I pondered thus, mine eye fell on a curiously wrought silver bugle lying in my path. Doubtless it had once belonged to some Cavalier, whose bones now lay bleaching by the wayside. I dismounted and picked it up. It was quaintly carved, and seemed of considerable value. I slung it at my belt and rode on—a little matter enough, but it was to render me right good service.

Naught of any interest chanced till I was fifteen miles or so on the Scottish side of the Border, and



well content was I to feel that in a few days I should be with my General once more. It was a wet afternoon and misty, and, seeing no human habitation, I resolved to spend the night in a thicket I perceived near. I led Gipsy under the shelter of the trees, and sitting down on a low bough, finished the little food I had with me. I had hardly done, ere I heard the sound of a soft trot on the turf, and then a rude laugh. Two or three men, all mounted and armed, were drawing rein not a dozen yards from me. Border reivers were getting scarce in our civilised times, but such I knew they must be. They held a short consultation, and then withdrew to a clump of fir-trees at some little distance.

Ere long I heard the rumble of wheels, and a coach came slowly along the road. I remembered having passed it half an hour before. Out came the freebooters with a shout. I saw two grooms on the coach; how many persons were within I knew not. A sudden thought struck me, and leaping on Gipsy I rode out of my resting-place. Then I wound my bugle till the hills answered again.

"A rescue!" I shouted. "A rescue!" and leaving the mist to do the rest I joined the fray.

Whether my ruse were successful, or whether a well-aimed shot from within the coach went far to decide the matter, I know not; but ere I could have counted twenty at a moderate pace, the villains drew off, and with considerable relief I saw them vanish in the fog, for I had begun to think that I was acting with more valour than discretion. I was bound on a royal errand; and until my despatches were delivered I had no



right to hazard my life thus. I knew my lord would observe this when I told him my tale; but I knew also that, had he been there, he would have acted precisely as I had done. While I thus reflected, forth from the coach stepped an old gentleman, stately and white-haired, reminding me for a moment of my Lord Napier. He was followed by a round-faced boy, whose eyes were sparkling with excitement. Doubtless it was he who had fired the shot. The old man bowed profoundly, and thanked me for my assistance with every expression of courtesy.

"Is there any way, young sir," he inquired, "in which I can show you my gratitude?"

"Nay, sir," quoth I. "I have done but little," and I looked at the boy.

"Alan did well," he said approvingly, "but we are much indebted to you, fair sir. May we know your name?"

I hesitated. Somehow I cared not to give him the false one I had ready, but neither could I tell him my own; so I looked him in the face and spake plainly.

"Sir," I said, "these are dangerous days, and did I tell you my name you would know more about me than it behoveth me to let a stranger know at present."

He bowed gravely, while the boy gazed at me in wonder.

"I comprehend your meaning, sir," he said, "and I foresee the day may come when you will be glad to have a friend at court, as the saying is, so I will be

more frank with you, and tell you that I am Sir Andrew Keith of Rosslyn, and a magistrate of Edinburgh. We are now returning thither after a sojourn with my sister at Dumfries."

"I thank you for your courtesy, sir," I said. "I would I could return it. As it is I hope you will pardon me."

He bowed again in assent in a very stately fashion, and then returned to his coach, motioning the boy Alan to re-enter also.

"I perceive, young sir," he observed, "we must not ask you to continue your journey as our fellow-traveller, so we will wish you God-speed on your way, and trust that some future time will afford us opportunity to show our gratitude and our appreciation of your gallantry."

I could only bow in reply, for I felt that the old gentleman's thanks far surpassed any assistance I had rendered him. The coach rumbled on. I returned to my thicket, where I soon fell asleep.

I have observed during my life that Heaven visits no sinner so speedily as he who boasts. When a man becometh great in his own eyes, assuredly that day his downfall draweth nigh. And so it was that I, being set up with the success of my journey, did not long abide in prosperity. When I awoke, it was to see a grim-looking trooper bending over me, with others behind him. As mine eyes opened, a couple of them caught hold of my arms and legs, and held them fast while I was searched. Alack for Mr. John Milton! There was a shout of satisfaction as one read out, "Oxford, 1645." No honest man could possibly



come from that hotbed of loyalty. So thought the prick-eared knaves, I doubt not. But worse was to come. As they felt my breeks the King's letter rustled within. A moment's work with a dagger, and it was brought to view. I could have wept with shame and anger as they pulled me to my feet and hurried me over the moor. On the road, a hundred men were drawn up on horseback, and hard by, Gipsy was grazing. "Oh, negligence fit for a fool to fall by!" In the excitement of the rescue I had forgotten to tether her to a tree within the copse; and I had thought myself so wary!

I was brought before the commanding officer, whom I afterwards learnt to be Major Strachan. He glanced at the letter, and his eye lighted up; but he had no mind to cross-question me on an open heath in wind and rain, so he thrust the despatch into his pocket and gave the order to advance.

I was set upon Gipsy with a trooper at either side of me to hold my bridle, and thus we came to a small village, where a halt was called. I was led into a farmhouse, and there, before the hearth, sat the major, an active, soldierly looking man of forty or thereabouts. I have heard it said that for pure fanaticism Major Strachan stood alone even in the army of the Covenant, and remembering his face, I can well believe it. He examined the seal and then, with a smile of triumph, he broke it and unfolded the letter, while I stood writhing by. Happily the Covenanters had left my hands free. Doubtless I seemed to them a

mere boy, and hitherto I had made no resistance. Their carelessness saved mine honour and the King's despatches. Wrenching myself free of the trooper who was holding me, I snatched the letter from the major's very hand and thrust it right into the blazing logs on the hearth. They all rushed upon me, while I fought and struggled, keeping directly in front of the fire, so that by the time some were binding me hand and foot and others were raking out bits of paper with their swords there was no word to be read.

Major Strachan's religion—such as it was—did not appear to assist him in the bridling of his tongue, and the oaths and curses he flung at me did not inspire me with overmuch respect for his piety. But neither for abuse nor rough handling did I care a jot. I could meet my lord now with a brave face and tell him all. True, I had failed—I who meant to succeed so wondrously! But still I had thwarted the Covenanters of their prize and had redeemed mine own honour.



CHAPTER VI.

A PRISONER.

TWO days later we rode into Edinburgh, and I was committed to the Tolbooth. Never before or since was it my lot to spend such a week of physical misery as I suffered there. The cell was exceeding small and dark, and the air beyond measure foul. It was damp and cold too, and hopelessly filthy. At times I felt as if I should go mad. To be there for weeks or months was a ghastly outlook. I could hardly remember having spent a day indoors in my whole life, and to be shut up thus for an indefinite length of time—the very thought drove me almost to distraction.

One day I was taken from my cell for half an hour to be examined, and it was positive joy to me, though I knew nothing was more likely than that I should be tortured with regard to the contents of the King's letter. That I was spared, I afterwards learned was due to the mediation of Sir Andrew Keith, who pleaded my extreme youth, and the service I had rendered him.

At my return to my cell I fell into a greater despondency than ever. Surely I should die ere

long in so wretched a hole. Would my lord know I was dead? Would he grieve very much? I could hardly endure it all that day and the next, but the third morning after my examination I heard steps without, and the key turning in the lock, at an unusual hour. It was my jailor. He was a short, thick-set man of forbidding aspect. He carried a lantern which lighted my little cell dimly, and from his leathern belt hung a bunch of keys and a short sword. He briefly bade me follow him, and I did so with alacrity. We mounted a long flight of stone steps, and entered a room where the sunlight streamed through narrow windows. It was tolerably clean and provided with a rough pallet and stool. I was so dazed by the light that at first I could hardly discern the figure of a man standing by the window. He turned, and coming towards me, said in a tone full of kindness and compassion,

"So we meet again, my young friend!"

It was Sir Andrew Keith.

I could well nigh have embraced him as he told me that he had interceded for me with the Covenanting leaders and had procured me a better lodging though he could not obtain my liberty. I thanked him many times; then he said,

"Is there aught else I can do for you?"

"Indeed there is, sir," quoth I. "First, may I have some water wherewith to wash?"

He laughed and told me that henceforth I should have my needs better attended to; but in truth it was no jesting matter to me for I was in no wise fit to be seen.



"Secondly, sir," I proceéded, "may I have a book to read?"

"If the Council will permit," he made answer, "I will bring you some books gladly."

"Thank you, sir," I said. "And lastly, I believe there are kinsmen of mine here in captivity. May I see them?"

"I doubt it," said Sir Andrew, "but tell me, whom mean you?"

"The Master of Napier. Is he not in confinement here, or at least forcibly prevented from joining my lord?"

The knight shook his head with a smile, and told me to my delight, that Archibald had escaped to the Highlands but a week since.

"But," he added gravely, "sore punishment hath fallen on his family in consequence. The old Lord Napier and the Laird of Keir have been cast into prison, and even Lady Elisabeth Napier and the young Lady Lilias are both in the Castle."

"Doth the Covenant make war on women?" I cried aghast. "Oh, I pray you, sir, of your courtesy let me see them!"

"It would be impossible for you to see my Lord Napier or Sir George Stirling," he answered, "it would not be permitted for an instant; but perchance you might see the ladies."

"And the Lady of Keir?" I asked. "Is she not with the others?"

He told me she was allowed to bide in her house in the Canongate for the present, and to have there Lady Elisabeth's three bairns, of which the youngest

was not above six months old, but she was not permitted to see her husband, father, or sisters.

"I will do my best to obtain permission for you," said Sir Andrew finally, and with these cheering words he left me.

I sat by the window till dark, watching the sentries in the courtyard below, and even enjoying a glimpse of the busy street beyond. Never had sun and clouds and sky seemed so beautiful to me; and my happiness was increased by my jailor's evening visit, for he brought with him a pitcher of water and a bowl, and withal a new suit of English cloth with Sir Andrew's compliments.

I went to sleep full of hope, and all the next day I hearkened for Sir Andrew's step upon the stairs. At last, when the afternoon shadows were lengthening, I perceived a coach stop at the iron gate of the courtyard, and forth from it came the figure of my good friend. I heard him anon slowly climb the steps, and he entered, his face beaming with kindliness.

"Now, Mr. Graham," he said, "you have but to give me your parole, and you may see your kinswomen at the Castle."

I gave it readily, and we set forth guarded by six troopers, despite that my word had been passed. So little did the Covenanters understand what Cavalier faith and honour were!

The old knight looked at me once or twice as we rumbled along with a grave smile.

"Are you near of kin to Montrose?" he asked at length.



"His father and my grandfather were second cousins," I explained, not without a touch of pardonable pride. It was not every Graham Laird that was so closely connected with Montrose.

There was a pause. Then Sir Andrew observed,

"They say Lady Lilias Napier is wonderfully fair."

His tone was such that I looked at him frankly and laughed.

"You are drawing a bow at a venture, sir," quoth I, "and I fear you have not hit the mark. This is no tale of love. I have long since resolved to lose my heart to none."

He looked surprised and amused.

"May I ask wherefore?" he said.

"Because I intend to live only for my Lord Montrose," I answered. "No lady shall ever come between me and his service."

Thus spake I in the self-confidence of youth, being very young and very foolish; for, though my dear and noble chief had—nay, hath—ever the first place in my heart, I was to find ere many years had passed, that there was room for another as well. Sir Andrew seemed much diverted, but ere I had time to be offended at his mirth the coach stopped and we alighted.

We were taken to a small chamber overlooking the grass-market. Bolts and bars were drawn back, and following Sir Andrew, I entered, hearing as I did so a voice I knew well.

"Oh, Betty, I am sick to death of this stupid broidery!"



A moment later I stood before them. At an embroidery-frame sat a damsel of seventeen. I had not seen her for nigh on two years, and then she had been but a slip of a maid, who had rambled over the moors with John and me, and who could pull an oar and draw a bow as well as any boy. That was the Lilias I knew, and I looked with some alarm at the beauteous maiden before me, who seemed to have changed in those two years from a child into a woman. She, however, was not struck by any such change in me. With a glad cry of, "Nigel! Oh, Betty, 'tis Nigel!" she ran forward and threw her arms round my neck. I responded to her welcome warmly, and then turned to Lady Napier, who I feared would be somewhat scandalised at her young sister-in-law's demonstrations. I hardly knew her at all, having only seen her once or twice at Kincardine, but I remember on these occasions how much I was struck by the exceeding sweetness of her face and manner. I now observed that she was slightly on her dignity with me, and cast a reproving glance at Lilias, who, however, heeded it no whit. I kissed her hand and inquired (as was proper) after Archibald and my Lord Napier, and then ere we spoke more Sir Andrew Keith said,

"I trust, fair ladies, ye will forgive my presence. I am bounden to give you no privy speech with your kinsman."

I trow we should all have resented this coming from anyone else, but the old knight was so kind and courtly that we assured him he would in no wise inconvenience us.



A Prisoner.

He betook himself to the further end of the chamber while we gathered at the window.

"And now, Nigel," quoth Lilias, "you must tell us everything. No news unless it be evil ever comes to us in these days."

"Let us first hear," quoth Lady Elisabeth, "how it is that you are a prisoner like ourselves."

So I told of my ride and of the court at Oxford, and when I came to the burning of the despatches, Lilias clapped her hands, and Lady Elisabeth (who had soon begun to unbend), smiled on me and said, "That was well done, Nigel!"

When I had told all, they asked eagerly for my lord and all those with him whom they knew. Only concerning one name they were silent. At last I marked that Lilias was looking very wistfully at me as if there were somewhat she would fain say and could not. Then Lady Elisabeth leant towards me, for I had sat me on a little stool near her, and said in a low voice,

"Nigel, tell us—were you with John—to the end? Lilias hath sorrowed sorely."

I told them as best I could. Lilias came from the window and sat at Lady Elisabeth's feet. Anon she slipped her hand into mine and held it fast, and they both wept grievously. When I had related all, we sat silent for a little space in the twilight, all of us, I doubt not, thinking of happy days gone by. And then the door opened, and a serving-maid entered with supper. Sir Andrew rose to go.

"Already!" cried Lilias. "Oh, Betty, we cannot let Nigel go so soon!"

Then Lady Elisabeth courteously entreated Sir Andrew that he would stay and sup with them and permit me to remain also. After a little persuasion he gave way, and we had quite a merry meal, for I was resolved to raise their spirits ere I left, and the old knight seconded me most gallantly. We parted in hopes of meeting again through his mediation; and Lady Elisabeth, when I fain would have saluted her hand, drew me nearer and kissed my cheek, saying,

"You know not how you have cheered us, Nigel. I pray God your life may be spared, and that we may meet again ere long."

As we went down the stairs that led from my cousins' chamber to the hall, a little boy was coming up followed by an old white-headed pedagogue. The light was very dim, but yet surely the childish figure was a familiar one. As he passed me he looked up. For a moment we stood still, then he sprang into my arms.

"Nigel, oh Nigel!" he almost sobbed. "Are you a prisoner too?"

Sir Andrew turned, and Master Forrett said to him,

"You will not part them at once, sir? Lord Graham hath not seen a friend's face, except mine, for a month now."

He opened a door as he spoke, and I disengaged myself a little from James, shook hands with the dominie and looked questioningly at Sir Andrew. He shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"This is exceeding my orders, Mr. Graham," he



said, "but still I will take the responsibility. A quarter of an hour though must be the limit."

We went into the room James shared with Master Forrett, and we two withdrew into the window-seat where we sat together and talked. James told me that he and the dominie had been carried off from Old Montrose by Sir John Hurry, who had raided the town. The news must have reached his father just after I left for Oxford.

"And Robin?" I asked. "And David?"

"Oh, they were at Kinnaird with my grandfather. So was my mother. I would almost rather be here. I feel I am doing somewhat for my father. Nigel—I must tell you—I had an offer of exchange yesterday, but I would not take it."

"Would not take it!" I cried aghast. "Wherefore not? What mean you?"

"Oh, Nigel, I could not," he answered. "There are several Royalist prisoners here who will be of real use to my father. I am too small to fight. It was far better that one of them should be free."

I looked down at the pale, resolute little face raised to mine and marvelled. It seemed to me as if Montrose's own spirit were living in his child. All that his choice meant for him, poor little lad, he did not know, but he was fully aware that, unless Montrose were victorious, he would remain a prisoner for months, perchance years, and he was not yet thirteen.

I told him what I thought, and what I knew his father would think of him; and I went back

to my cell in the Tolbooth ashamed of mine own murmuring and impatience.

The day on which I was permitted to see my cousins was the happiest of all my imprisonment, and the gloomy months that followed I will briefly pass over. I was never allowed to visit them again, and Sir Andrew was highly censured for allowing me to have speech with James. Ere long, Master Forrett was removed from him and a tutor given him, who would train him up in the way the Covenanters thought he should go. Lady Elisabeth and Lilias, meanwhile, had been removed to Linlithgow Castle, and as Sir Andrew Keith fell very seriously ill at this time, he never visited me again. I could not glean any news of Montrose from my jailor, though I contrived to gather a little indirectly from the conversation of the minister, who came every Sabbath afternoon to discourse about the state of my soul. Had I turned heretic, sceptic, or blasphemer, the blame could well have been laid at the door of Mr. Dickson. He it was who only a few months later stood on the scaffold to gloat over the last moments of Scottish Cavaliers, and as the axe fell pitilessly, rubbed his hands with horrible glee, saying,

"The wark gangs bonnily on!"

Well, can I believe it! From my heart I loathed the man, and yet I welcomed his coming, for at times he would lash himself into such a frenzy against "that man of Belial, James Graham," that my hopes were raised, and as the summer months wore away I found myself listening daily for a skirl of the pipes, and imagining that each evening as it came would



see the Provost and magistrates of Edinburgh going forth to the Netherbow to present the keys of the capital to my victorious General. Meanwhile, a deadly plague had laid hold of the city—obviously a visitation for the sins of the Covenanters, as I told Mr. Dickson—and from my little window where I could catch a glimpse of the street I watched funeral after funeral go by.

One pleasant evening in the latter part of August, as I sat there watching the gloomy scenes below, and feeling—I scarce knew wherefore—strangely sick at heart, I observed an unusual commotion in the quiet courtyard below. Several turnkeys came out and whispered together and then vanished within as from another door the governor of the Tolbooth came out and held converse with one or two officers. On a sudden I sprang to my feet and pressed my face against the window-bars to see as far as I could. On either side the courtyard was a turret; from one flew a flag bearing the arms of the city, and from the other the blue banner of the Covenant. As I looked out I perceived St. Andrew's cross was being pulled down. It was always taken in at sunset, but never before, and a wild hope took possession of me. Another flag was drawn up, and I gazed, half stupefied with joy, at the crimson and gold of the Royal Standard. Then one of the officers below raised his hat and said in a melancholy voice, "Long live the King!"

"Hurrah!" I cried, and then laughed at the sound of mine own voice, it was so weak and thin. As the officers glanced up at my cheer I perceived a small



company of horsemen draw up at the gate of the prison. Their leader dismounted and entered the courtyard. He was a young man, only a few years older than I, but shorter and slighter, with a singularly refined face. It was Archibald Napier. He spoke with the governor and they both disappeared from my sight.

Ere long I heard steps on the stairs, the door was unfastened, and in came my kinsman. How good it was to see the face of a friend, and feel the clasp of his hand!

"Why, Nigel," he cried, "we had all given you up for dead long since, all but mine uncle, who ever bade us hope for the best. We heard you had reached Oxford, and then naught more till I saw my wife and sister last Thursday at Linlithgow, and they told me I should find you here. Even then I dared hardly think of you as still alive in this plague-stricken city. How long have you been here? How were you taken?"

Archibald's questions ran on while I did my best to answer them, and to glean in return some of the news I so sorely longed to hear.

"I will tell you all anon," said he. "Come, let us go down. We are to sup here and then to start at once, for Montrose will not have us sleep in this plague-stricken city."

"But we must go to the Castle first," I cried. "Or have you already been? Where is James?"

He shook his head sadly.

"The Castle has not surrendered. Poor little lad!"



He turned and went down the stone steps, I following, but ere we reached the governor's room where we were to sup with other freed Cavaliers I caught his arm.

"One moment," I said. "I want to ask you somewhat. Would they let me be with James, think you, if—if——"

"Nay, Nigel," quoth he. "Impossible! They have dismissed Master Forrett. No one I hear is to be with him who might 'poison his mind.' Besides, even if it could be, I doubt whether it would be right for you. We can ill spare one loyal sword—and then Montrose hath missed you sorely."

I confess I was relieved at his words. It would have been no easy task to lay aside the liberty just within my grasp, yet as we left the Tolbooth that evening and I looked up to where the Castle frowned over the city, it seemed well nigh selfish to be riding away to freedom and happiness. Archibald perceived what I was feeling, and remarked so confidently that the Castle would surrender ere long that I took comfort and gave myself up to happier thoughts.

Surely we know not our blessings till we are deprived of them. Never before had I rightly valued the joy of liberty and the sweet freshness of country air. So soon as we were out of the city I spurred my horse before the rest of the company, and raced away for a mile or so, shouting as if I were mad. I think Archibald feared my brain had been a little turned by my confinement, but I cared not. Anon I grew calmer, and riding at a more sober pace at his

side, prayed him to tell me all that had passed since I left for England.

Two victories had been won in the north soon after, one dearly bought—alas!—for my Lord Gordon had been among the slain. Then Montrose had marched southward, and on August 15th had defeated, nay, annihilated the last force the Covenanters could raise against him. Six thousand rebels lay dead on the field, Edinburgh and Glasgow surrendered, and the way to England was opened. True, we still had much cause for anxiety—the Highlanders had gone home *en masse*, partly to take back their booty (as was their inconvenient custom after every battle), partly to get in their harvests, partly because they had no intention of going to England. Colkitto had also departed with half the Irishmen to raid Argyllshire, and my lord had not above seven hundred men. But we trusted the Border Lairds and Nobles would now flock to the standard (a vain hope!), and we knew not David Leslie was spurring north, yea, and was almost upon us with six thousand Scottish horse from the Covenanting army in England. To Archibald and to me on that summer evening the future seemed dazzling. To meet the King on the Border, and to crush Leslie as we had crushed Argyll, to see if my lord's masterly strategy were not a match for Cromwell's generalship, seemed to us inevitable. In the face of coldness, indifference, without money, without supplies, my lord had raised an army, had kept the field for a year, had outgeneralled forces of three times his strength, and in this short time had made himself master, for the



moment at least, of Scotland. He had done so much with everything against him; why should he not do all?

That night I lay down to rest on heather, with pine-trees above me, and such a sense of joy and freedom in my heart as I had not known for three long months. I was about to fall asleep when I heard Archibald's voice.

"Are you awake, Nigel?" he asked, and when I assented drowsily, he continued, "I thought I would tell you for your comfort that mine uncle hath been in no little grief of mind anent your disappearance."

"Yea?" I said, sitting upright. "Tell me more."

Archibald laughed quietly. "There is naught else," he said; "only that he will be content to have you at his side again."

I was well content too, so wrapping my cloak more closely about me, I meditated on my kinsman's words till I fell asleep.

The following evening we rode into the camp, which was at a small village nigh unto Glasgow. My lord's headquarters were in a farmhouse, and as I followed Archibald in, I perceived that a council of war had just been held, for my lord's principal officers were all coming out, and as we went down a passage a door opened and forth came my Lord Napier. Archibald stopped to greet his father, and I, being all impatience, slipped past and entered the room.

There at a table with some letters and papers before him, sat my lord with Master Thomas

Sydserf, his secretary. He glanced up to see who it might be.

"Nigel!" he cried. "Nigel—dear lad—this is almost more than I had dared to hope."

I would fain have knelt, but he would not suffer it, and embraced me affectionately. Then he held me at arm's length, and surveyed me. "You look half starved, boy," he said.

"I have been in Edinburgh Tolbooth, sir," I explained, "these three months or more."

"And the despatches?" he asked with a keen eye upon me. "I understood from His Majesty's last letter he had entrusted you with some."

"I destroyed them, sir," I said. "Think you, my lord, I could have faced you had the Covenanters got them?"

"In truth, Nigel," he answered with a smile, "I fancied you looked a trifle shamefaced."

I coloured at his words for I had some cause to do so, and seeing it, he said:

"Come and tell me all, my boy."

He took a seat at the open window, and I sat me at his feet as in the old days at Kincardine, and told him all, hiding from him no whit.

"I will in no wise excuse myself, sir," I said finally. "I was over set up at rescuing Sir Andrew Keith, and at having performed my mission successfully, and so I forgot about Gipsy. I am very sorry, sir." I glanced up anxiously, but his look reassured me.

Then the door opened, and Inchbraikie thrust his head in.



"I trust you are eating your own words, James," he observed.

My lord laughed, and I grew very hot, for I minded how he had said, "Nigel will never be caught napping."

"Methinks, Patrick," quoth my lord, "I had good cause to trust my messenger, nevertheless." And as the Laird went away, he added, "You have done very well on the whole, lad. Now tell me more of the King, and of your journey, and of Edinburgh."

So we talked till the moon rose and looked in at the latticed window. Then my lord bestirred himself.

"You must go to rest now, my boy," he said, "for we start with the sun to-morrow."

"For where, my lord?" I asked.

"For the Border," he returned with a joyous smile. "For the Border to meet the King—and perchance David Leslie."

"For the Border, sir?" cried Archibald, entering at that moment, for in the goodness of his heart he had left us thus long undisturbed. "Say rather for Oxford."

"Nay, for Whitehall, if you will!" quoth my lord, and the words rang in mine ears with a pleasant sound, as I found my way to the little room next door, which was to serve him as a bedchamber, and established myself with a plaid in a corner.

I lay awake for long, contrasting with much satisfaction my present quarters with my gloomy cell in the Tolbooth, and unrolling—as was ever my wont before sleep—some magnificent plans for the future, which were, alas! never to be realised.



I was in truth almost too happy to sleep, and I was still wakeful when soon after midnight my lord came in with Inchbraikie. The Laird departed, and Montrose moved the little lamp to a table near my corner, and took a look at me.

"My dear lord," I cried, "I pray you do not send me away again. I desire to bide with you always, sir."

"You have had a hard time, Nigel," he observed. "In truth you have so wretched an air I doubt if I ought not to send you back to Glenternie for a month's rest; but—well, methinks I cannot spare you at present. You must sleep at once though. Not a word more!"

I closed mine eyes obediently, but I heard him say as he turned away, "I cannot lose him too."



CHAPTER VII.

AFTER PHILIPHAUGH.

TWO score years have gone by since I followed Montrose to battle, and yet the memory of those fights is as of yesterday. Never shall I forget those charges through the braes of Philiphaugh; when I think of it I seem to see again the massy squadrons, advancing to swallow up our little troop, looming strange and indistinct in the misty autumn morning. I can hear the crash as we closed with them, the clash of arms and the shouts of the enemy, and above the roar of the tumult, my lord's voice, "For God and the King!" We followed him to charge after charge and fought till our swords clave unto our hands, and there were but fifty of us left. I mind well, too, the flight that followed, as we spurred away over Minchmoor, and how, when a troop of horse pursued us, my lord called a halt, and wheeling round led us back to charge them, so that they returned to Leslie with many empty saddles and without their standard.

Two days later we were back at Blair, and my lord was gathering in recruits as if the defeat at Philiphaugh had been only an evil dream. But

the spell was broken; the clans would never rise so confidently again, and when we marched south they ever went home.

So a whole year dragged through, with a skirmish here and there, and by degrees we were forced back to the shelter of the friendly mountains. It was a long, sad year, and every messenger who came to Blair was the bearer of some melancholy news. In England things were even worse, for there was no royal army left in the field, and we were the last in arms; it was something to feel that, but our ranks were becoming sadly thinned. Colonel Nathaniel Gordon, Sir Robert Spottiswoode, my Lord Ogilvy, Andrew Guthrie, and young Inverquharity (who had but lately joined us and was a year my junior) had all been taken prisoner and were condemned to death, though quarter had been promised them. We made a wild dash south to save them, but had to fall back, for the Gordons would not support us—thanks to the miserable jealousy of Huntly, who, as Dr. Wishart hath said in his most noble book, "desired rather that all things were lost than that Montrose should have the honour of saving them." So they all suffered except my Lord Ogilvy, who effected a marvellous escape in his sister's clothes; and my lord mourned them deeply, yet would he in no wise retaliate (though all his officers prayed him to do so), but continued to treat his prisoners with all courtesy and consideration as aforetime.

One thing of note occurred in the spring of 1646, which, as it concerned Montrose most closely, I must



not omit. I was leaving his chamber at Blair Castle on some slight errand one early morning, when I perceived old Lord Napier standing in the hall in converse with one or two Graham Lairds. He called me, and laying a hand on my arm, said,

"Glenternie, we have received news of the death of the Lady Magdalen."

I could not grieve, for I loved her not. She had ever seemed to me as proud and hard as she was beautiful, and besides——! So I merely said,

"I suppose my lord will be riding over to Old Montrose to-day."

"By heaven, I trust not!" broke in Inchbraikie, who was standing near. "If he does, he will never return. The Covenanters will have gotten wind of this business and——"

As he spoke, the door opened, and forth came my lord.

"How now, Archibald?" he cried. "What will the leech say? You should be still abed, I trow." (For the old Cavalier was past seventy and becoming very aged and frail.) But the look on our faces checked my lord's smile, and Napier, laying a hand on his shoulder, said,

"Brother, I would fain have a privy word with you."

They turned away into my lord's chamber, and I went about mine errand, which, for the moment, I had forgotten. As I re-entered the hall half an hour later, I found that both Montrose and Napier had returned.

"My friends," my lord was saying, "I am resolved

to ride across to Old Montrose. 'Twill be fraught with danger, and there is no reason why you should come."

"That is just the reason why we should come," observed Inchbraikie.

"But this is not for the King," returned Montrose. "So I do not command your services. Those who wish may come, and welcome."

"Not for the King, forsooth—and what boots that?" muttered the Laird, as Montrose and my Lord Napier left the hall. "I am thinking, gentlemen, that my lord commands our services as no king doth."

There was a general and eager assent—as my lord was safely out of hearing—and a hurrying off to the stables, so that when Montrose left, twenty minutes later, it was with a score of gallant Grahams behind him, and others beside.

My Lord Napier came down to see us off, and as he stood by Montrose's horse, I thought how old and ill he looked, and how thin was the hand that grasped my lord's.

"Farewell, James," I heard him say. "I would I could come with you, dear brother, but I should only be an hindrance."

Then we rode away, turning once to look back as he stood on the drawbridge and lifted his hat to us. Ah, if there were such men now! How sorely Scotland needeth the wisdom and sober loyalty of Napier, and the enthusiasm of Montrose. These are evil times, and to whom shall we look for leadership? True, there is my kinsman of



Claverse, and at times his tones and looks will bring to my mind the days that are gone, so perchance—yet I know not.

As good luck would have it, we reached Old Montrose the next afternoon, without so much as seeing a rebel. Robin and David met us at the door, and I watched them greeting their father, half-shyly, half-eagerly. How I wished they could come back with us to Blair! In truth, I had ventured to broach the subject to my lord during the ride, but he had briefly said it was impossible, with a sternness that had amazed me. Now, as I saw him lift little David in his arms and kiss him, I realised that he longed for his little sons even more than I did, and that it was only for their own sakes that he left them quietly at home.

We went to the chapel at once, my lord leading the way, with one hand on Robin's shoulder and the other clasping little David's. At the door, Inchbraikie stopped me and bade me hie to the keep, there to watch lest the rebels should surprise us. I thought he might have sent a servant-knave on so easy an errand, and I went off slowly, not best pleased. In the passage I met Rudolf.

"Away to the keep," I said. "Bide there to look for the enemy till I come."

He went, and I slipped into the chapel. It was dimly lighted. The coffin of the Lady Magdalen was at the upper end of the aisle. Near it stood her father, the Earl of Southesk, and two of her brothers. For many years past there had been a difference between Montrose and

his father-in-law. Now, as he came forward, the one faced the other for a minute in silence and then they shook hands. I have often pondered on all that business. It was at the risk of his life—and he knew it—that my lord had dashed across from Blair to the funeral of the woman who had not loved him as she should. But she was John's mother, and perchance he only thought then of the beautiful maiden who first caught his boyish fancy, seventeen years before, on the banks of the Esk.

Ere the service began, mine eyes fell on a man kneeling on the chapel floor not far from the coffin; as I looked on him, a nameless fear took hold of me, and hardly knowing why, I made my way unobserved almost to my lord's side. Then the stranger rose and faced him. The Marquis started, drew himself up, and in a low tone demanded,

"Sir Ian Campbell, what do you here?"

"Have pity, Montrose!" said the stranger. "Let me see the end!"

He unbuckled his sword as he spoke, and offered it to Montrose, but my lord refused it with a wave of his hand.

"I have wronged you and yours," he went on pleadingly. "Before God I repent, and ask your forgiveness."

Blasphemous scoundrel! I saw the steel gleam beneath his doublet. Silently my dirk came out. For a space my lord glanced keenly at him. Then, on a sudden, the villain's hand shot forth



and I threw myself between them and drove my dirk home.

After that I hardly know what befell. A sharp stinging pain came into my left arm and I felt sick and dizzy. Before me lay the fellow, dying or dead, and I heard my lord say,

"Take him away. Let not a traitor's blood stain the floor of the House of God."

Then all grew very dark and I knew no more.

When I came to myself, I was lying on a couch in the library, and my lord was standing by me, pulling on his riding gloves.

"They are after us, Nigel," he said, as I opened mine eyes. "We must be gone, and you must follow us in a few days. Sore grieved am I to leave you here, but they are Middleton's troopers, and he will never suffer a wounded man to be touched. My Lord Southesk has promised to see to you, and the boys will amuse you."

"But I can go with you, sir," I cried, struggling to my feet. I found, nevertheless, that I could not stand, and had perforce to lie down again.

Meanwhile there was a jingle of swords and spurs in the hall, impatient stamping of feet, and cries of,

"My lord! My lord! We shall be too late!"

Then in came the Master of Gorthie.

"Sir, you must not tarry," he said quickly. "There are some more troops approaching—Campbells, we fear."

"Campbells!" cried my lord. "Nigel, you must come with us. Southesk will have no power to

protect you against them. I cannot leave you here."

"No, no, my dear lord!" I cried. "You must start at once. It matters not about me," for I was sore afraid he would have no time to make good his escape.

Then in burst Inchbraikie furiously.

"James, ye are a fule! Leave the callant to me and oot wi' ye—oot and awa'!"

"Peace, Patrick!" quoth my lord, "and lend me a hand here."

And bending down, my lord lifted me in his arms and bore me from the room. A minute later I was on his horse (despite mine uncle's vehement demands that I should ride before him), and Montrose, mounting behind me, rode off at the head of his Cavaliers. It was a miracle that we ever escaped out of the jaws of our foes, but it was already dusk, and the darkness saved us. Our horses were tired out, so that we could not go far, and spent the night in a lonely glen known to my lord. I mind it well, for I was feverish and restless, and I lay all the time with my head on my dear lord's knee, he tending me as if he had been my mother.

It took us nearly a week's manœuvring to get back to Blair, and there a great sorrow fell upon us. In our absence old Lord Napier had passed away. Each one of us felt he had lost a friend, and my dear lord was well-nigh broken-hearted, for Napier had been to him father, friend, and elder brother in one, despite the forty years disparity in their ages.



After Philiphaugh.

With the summer came the King's letter—he was a prisoner in the hands of the Covenanting army in England—bidding my lord disband his forces and make what terms he could for himself. So Montrose treated with General Middleton, meeting him alone on the banks of the Isla, I only attending to hold my lord's horse. Kings, I have observed, waste weeks and months over negociations. Such was not my lord's way of doing business. For two hours he walked up and down with Middleton, and then all was done, and we rode away to the camp. Most of us were to be pardoned and to have our lands restored, so long as Montrose himself, with Inchbraikie and a few others, had quitted the country in a month's time. All my lord's officers besought him—yea, even on their knees—to let them follow him to the world's end; but he would not permit them to forfeit the pardon he had won for them, and there were wives and children and lands to be thought of. So he sent them all home, and for the time being they went, though many joined us later at Paris and the Hague.

The Covenanters were furious with Middleton for the easy terms he had granted us, and tried to make us tarry over the month, so that they might then fall upon us. Long dealings with the Argyll faction, however, had made us very wary, and we were able to frustrate their plans. Thus, two years and a month after the Royal Standard had been raised at Blair, Montrose was off on the high seas to Norway. Robin and David were left at Kinnaird in their grandfather's keeping. Had my lord foreseen the

future, I think he would have arranged for them to go abroad with Sir George Stirling and his wife, who left Edinburgh ere long for Germany. Cousin Margaret, indeed, often said to me at Hamburg how pleased she would be to have the boys, for she had no bairns of her own. But my lord never comtemplated being abroad more than a year or so, deeming he would be sure to get another commission from Queen Henrietta, who was in Paris.

James had been committed by the Covenanters to the Earl of Dalhousie for his education, and later on was sent to his grandfather at Kinnaird. With Montrose went a few kinsmen and friends, and of these, whom only death could separate from him, I need hardly say I was one.



CHAPTER VIII.

EXILE.

IT was a calm and peaceful evening as the vessel which carried us to our exile stood out to sea. The sun was setting over the hills inland, and lit up the town and the links and the bare and battered walls of the castle, which the Campbells had sacked and burnt some months before.

My lord stood in the stern, his eyes fixed on the receding country, and spake no word. Our hearts in truth were sad, yet we had him with us whom we loved above all men. Our lands were harried, our homes burnt; henceforth where our leader was there was our home, where he led there we followed. But for him it was different. He was leaving his King in the hands of Argyll, and our country under the heel of the Campbells. All his work, all his devotion, all his brave enterprise had been in vain. It was as if Inverlochy and Kilsyth had never been fought and won. With a sudden impulse I crossed the deck and stood at his side striving to find words. He understood what I fain would have said, for he laid his hand on my shoulder, and we paced up and down together.



"This is an ill day for Scotland, sir," I said at last. "Please God we will soon return."

"We will, Nigel," he answered earnestly. "I for one am not going to settle down quietly in Paris as so many English Cavaliers are doing. We must work, lad, and get foreign help rather than none at all. To think of the King—so gentle and so gracious—in the hands of those traitors, without a friend to call his own—without one sword drawn in his defence——!"

His face flushed, and I could feel the hand on my shoulder tremble with emotion.

"It is only for a time, sir," I cried. "Right must win in the end." One is hopeful at nineteen. I did not say that a few years later.

"Nay, Nigel," quoth my lord sadly. "Right—as I take you mean it—doth not always win in the end. A man is not successful here because he is leal and true. Half the world's history is the story of gallant failures. In one sense I grant you that right cannot fail, for no good man has ever lived in vain, and methinks that across many a life that seems to us but failure, God will write 'Success.'"

Those words came back to me in after days when my lord had led the forlorn hope, and stood on the scaffold at the Market Cross, himself a "gallant failure." Yet who shall say he truly failed? for we are finite men who judge only from what we know, and cannot see into the future. And, as he said, there may be a success of which we here know naught.

After several days we landed at Bergen on the



Norwegian coast, and were very kindly received by Scottish settlers there. Later on we proceeded to Hamburg, where we were joined by Sir George Stirling and Cousin Margaret. They took a little house and dwelt there for the present, as my lord deemed it a favourable post for any future embarkation, and was desirous of having a friend he could so trust at such a place. When we had to give up thoughts of any immediate return to Scotland the Stirlings moved to Schiedam. Lilias was not there when we first arrived, but at Merchiston with Lady Elisabeth. Both she and Archibald were detained in Scotland by the Covenanters, and a grievous fine was laid upon them for their own and their father's loyalty. Archibald, indeed, was not permitted to come abroad for another year, being even then warned by the rebels not to hold converse with Montrose should he accidentally meet him! Ere long Lilias was allowed to join the Stirlings, and reached Hamburg in company with other Scottish exiles, among whom notably were the Laird of Gorthie and his son. She was looking very pale and down-hearted, but a month with us wrought a wondrous change in her, and, ere we left, she was again her blithe merry self. She told me she much wished to obtain a post about the person of Queen Henrietta—more that she might be near her uncle and Archibald than for any desire for court life.

One evening before supper I entered the parlour to find the matter under discussion. Lilias was looking very downcast I thought, as she stood by my



lord's side at the fire, so I feared her project was not likely to succeed.

"Dear Uncle," she was saying, "wherefore should you not take me with you? I promise I will be no drag on you, nor will my tire-woman—she rides exceeding well."

"It is not a question of that," quoth my lord. "I should be well content to take you, dear heart, but—" and he looked across at Margaret who glanced up from a ruffle she was mending, and shook her head.

"Oh, Margaret," cried Lilias, "why do you look thus? You know mine uncle will be guided by your advice. Why will you not let me go?"

"You are too young, Lilias," said her sister with a decision which I knew settled the question at once. "I have already spoken with Montrose on the subject, and he agrees with me entirely. If, when he gets to Paris, he finds that Her Majesty would be willing to have you, and that the court there is a fitting place for a young maid, you shall certainly go, but I cannot let you go unknowing."

"You cannot trust me, I suppose!" cried Lilias with a flash in her eyes and a toss of her red curls.

"Peace, child," said my lord. "Margaret is right. I doubt much if it will be feasible, but I will let you know. Besides, apart from the thought of Paris, I know not if it would be wise—or even seemly—for a young maiden to be scouring the country with so many young gallants in attendance, and no lady to take care of her."

My lord did not speak without good reason; for half his followers had already lost their hearts



to my fair cousin, and were mightily jealous of me because she treated me as if I were her brother. Robin Graham of Killearn too, was full of attentions when no one was by, to which Lilias was not so averse as perchance she should have been, knowing well what manner of man he was.

"Margaret hath been saying all this to you, sir," cried poor Lilias wrathfully. "Ye are both in league against me, and so is George."

"I confess it, Lilias, I am," admitted Keir laughing.

"And even Nigel will say naught on my behalf," and she turned to me appealingly.

"Well," said Sir George, "he shall give you his brotherly counsel. Come, Glenternie," as I hesitated, "let us hear the oracle."

"Truly, Lilias," quoth I, "I know naught of these matters, and Cousin Margaret doth. I wish you could come with us with all my heart, but if I were you I should abide by her advice."

"Soundly given, Nigel," said my lord. "We will take it as conclusive." He drew Lilias to him and kissed her. "I am grieved to refuse you, dear heart," he said, "but it cannot be at present. You must contain your soul in patience, and I will see what can be done in the future."

So the matter ended, and well for Lilias it did. Later I know my lord writ to the Stirlings saying it was impossible, and that not for the world would he suffer Lilias to go to a place so full of temptation and danger for a young maid.

Early in 1647 we left Hamburg, and right sorry was I for one to quit the Stirlings, for their bright



cheerful house had become to me almost as home. Yet I was eager to see Paris of which I had often heard my lord speak; and we trusted that Montrose would shortly receive a commission from the Queen. In this respect, however, we were grievously disappointed. We came to the French capital, and lodged in a pleasant little hostelry on the outskirts of the city. I was greatly taken with the French folk, for they all, high and low, made much of my lord, and indeed of us all. To say you were a follower of Montrose seemed to be a passport to the heart of any Parisian. Not so did the English feel towards us. They spoke of my lord as "the Great Marquis," but it seemed to us that they were much wanting in courtesy and respect to him. Looking back calmly on that time, as I can now, I believe we also were to blame, for we were very jealous for my lord, and desired that all the English Cavaliers should show him the honour that we did.

At the little court my lord found himself in much difficulty. The Queen herself, a brave, sprightly lady, full of spirit and of real love for her husband, looked upon my lord at first with some favour, as well she might do; but my Lord Jermyn exercised a marvellous great influence over her, and he loved not my lord, being very jealous of him.

Matters were in this condition when one evening I with Killearn, David Guthrie, Gilbert Menzies (he was one of the Menzies of Pitsfoddels in Aberdeenshire), and some other young gallants were sitting in our room talking and reading. I was cleaning my



sword, and Killearn and I were entertaining our comrades with snatches of old ballads, when my lord looked in and nodded to me.

"A word with you, Nigel," said he, "when you have drowned Sir Patrick Spens."

"Your bidding first, sir," said I. "Sir Patrick can bide in Norroway for the present."

"M. de Gondi has been with me," said the Marquis, "I want you to see him home for he has no attendant with him, and the streets of Paris are no more safe at night than those of our own Edinburgh."

So I went off with his Eminence and escorted him to the Archbishop's palace. It was a considerable distance, and I knew that supper would be over by the time that I returned to the Fleur-de-Lys. Accordingly I went into a tavern near the Louvre much frequented by exiled Cavaliers, and ordered some food. There were a good many Englishmen standing about talking and smoking. I exchanged one or two greetings, haughtily enough I fear, and sat down somewhat apart.

I had nearly finished my meal when a couple of gentlemen entered — Captain Grenville, a young Cornish Cavalier, and Colonel Hewitt, whom you may recollect was Captain of the Guard at Oxford. We had met once or twice in Paris, and a very slight and haughty bow, which doubtless I had returned in similar fashion, showed me that the Englishman had considerable aptitude for remembering faces. The two went up to the fire and began to warm their hands, for it was a chilly evening, though early in May.



Kinsmen.

"Have you heard the latest news, gentlemen?" asked Colonel Hewitt, glancing round. "Hamilton is said to be forming a middle party in Scotland to rescue His Sacred Majesty."

"Hamilton!" cried another English Cavalier incredulously. "We had enough of Hamilton at Oxford, I trow. Doth he expect to succeed where the Great Marquis failed?"

"Just so," put in Grenville. "Besides, the Duke never knoweth his own mind, and is no soldier though he believes himself to be a born general, and then—well—he hath hitherto been somewhat lukewarm in the cause."

I was about to contribute with some heat the fact that his Grace of Hamilton was a fool and a traitor, for I knew in what low esteem my lord held him, when Colonel Hewitt added,

"Better lukewarm, than a renegade Covenanter like Montrose."

Down went my knife and fork.

"No good has ever come of trusting those Scots," he continued.

I rose to my feet.

"Nay," said another Cavalier—Sir Harry Cavendish by name, "you go too far there, Colonel. Scotland has given us our ablest general and our most devoted champion. Is it not so, gentlemen?"

"You are right there, Cavendish," said one voice, but the rest were silent.

"For my part, I cannot abide Montrose," observed Colonel Hewitt. "He carries himself as if the whole world belonged to him, and as for that conceited



young coxcomb for ever swaggering at his heels, dearly should I love to give him a taste of English steel!"

"I shall be delighted, sir," I cried, and stepped forward.

The English Cavaliers had entirely forgotten my presence and were amazed.

"I had no idea," protested the Colonel. "Believe me, young sir, I had no idea that I was in the company of aught but a few confidential friends."

"I imagine such to be the case," I answered. "I suppose that even Colonel Hewitt would hardly have spoken in such terms of the Marquis of Montrose had he known a Scottish Cavalier to be within hearing. But the insult remains, and I must request satisfaction, sir—without delay."

"At once and here?" he queried.

"The sooner the better, sir," I said, and unsheathed my sword forthwith.

The other gentlemen present remonstrated, but they might as well have spoken to the wind.

"You ought not to fight him, Hewitt," objected Sir Harry Cavendish, "that stripling is no match for you."

And I warrant it was hard work. Colonel Hewitt was famous as a swordsman, tall and long armed, so that I had to play a most cautious and defensive game.

Suddenly the door opened. A young man entered with several attendants, and the Cavaliers fell back to make way for His Royal Highness Prince Maurice.

"How now, gentlemen?" he cried authoritatively.

"What means this ado? No seconds? An idle brawl? Sheath your swords."

The command was imperative. Colonel Hewitt stepped back, bowed, and sheathed his sword, but what cared I for Prince Maurice?

"Oblige me by coming outside, sir," I said to the Colonel.

Then from the gentlemen who had come with the Prince one stepped out and looked at me. It was my lord.

Sullenly I sheathed my sword and muttered an apology to the Prince, which was more graciously received than given. Then he turned to Montrose with a slight laugh and said,

"You have a fierce young spark there, my lord, albeit well in hand."

"And withal, sir, right leal and loving," quoth Montrose, but this doubtless I was not intended to hear.

Meanwhile Colonel Hewitt had expressed something of an apology, though I regret to say I did not offer him my hand, and could hardly bring myself to reply with bare civility to his speech. His Royal Highness seemed to have come in search of Sir Harry Cavendish, for the two went off together, and as my lord looked about to go also, I prepared to follow him.

"One word, young sir," called Colonel Hewitt. "Who taught you to use a sword, for you have been trained by a master hand?"

"A renegade Covenanter, sir," said I, and followed my lord out of the tavern.



Once across the road I burst out with all that had occurred. Montrose listened to the end. Then he laughed a little.

"One for me, and two for you, Nigel," he said.

"Let them say what they like about me," I cried, "but that they should say such things about you, sir——!"

"I fear me," said my lord gravely, "that there is a most unaccountable friction between Scotsmen and Englishmen here. Methinks it is most melancholy that when we are exiles together in a good cause, bound to one another by such a tie as loyalty, there should be all this jarring and these petty jealousies. No doubt there have been faults on both sides. The English have been cold and distant, as if they grudged us the glory of our temporary victory, and, on my part, peradventure I have stood overmuch on my dignity, thinking we were slighted. But one thing is clear—you must forgive my saying it, my dear boy—and that is, my over-zealous friends have a good deal to answer for. For instance, Nigel, you were much wanting in courtesy and respect to Prince Maurice to-night."

"I sheath my sword at no command but yours, sir," I said haughtily.

"Precisely," he returned, "and so give proof to the accusation that the Scottish Cavaliers treat me as if I were their King—to put the thing in very plain terms."

This was an unanswerable remark, and I walked on rebuked and silent till we reached our lodging. Then he paused and said simply,

"It is very difficult here, Nigel. Do not make it harder for me."

I went to our room for a few minutes, but was in no mind for talk or jest, and having quarrelled with Menzies, and nearly fought Killearn, I retired wrathfully to bed.

Colonel Hewitt's words rang in my ears—"a conceited young coxcomb for ever swaggering at his heels." They were unjust, but there was sufficient truth in them to make them rankle very deeply. And I bethought me of my lord's appeal,

"Do not make it harder for me."

I was annoyed that such trifles should disturb my peace of mind, but I tried to banish them in vain. Then, as a distant chime struck eleven, I heard my lord's step on the stair. I had a slip of a room next his, and as he went into his chamber I came out. To my annoyance Lasonde, his body-servant, was there.

"What? Still up, Nigel?" asked my lord.

"Can I—can I do aught for you, sir?" I faltered.

"I have left a book on my study table," said he, "will you get it?"

I ran down, and when I returned Lasonde was gone, so I took it into the room and shut the door behind me. My lord was standing by the lamp, his head bent down, looking earnestly at a miniature of John, which he always wore. He closed it, put it away, and took the volume I had brought him. There was no call for me to stay, yet I could not go.

"What is it, Nigel?" he said. "Has aught gone wrong with you?"



Then I looked him in the face and said,

"I am sorry, sir. I will try to be more courteous to the English Cavaliers."

"My dear lad," he said in some surprise, "I am not angry with you. You have taken what I said too much to heart. I fear me we are all to blame, Scots and English alike."

"Not you, my lord!" I cried.

"And wherefore not?" he asked with a smile. One minute, Robin" (for there was a knock at the door), "we will talk of this more to-morrow, Nigel; I have to speak with Killearn now. Good night, my boy," and as he held out his hand I perceived a very tender light in his eyes, and he added, "Methinks, Nigel, you fill John's place as I never thought anyone could."

"Oh, my dear lord!" I cried, and could say no more; but I bent my head and kissed the hand that grasped mine; and I felt that night that not one of his friends, not even Inchbraikie or Archibald, could love my lord as I did.



CHAPTER IX.

RALPH BEVERLEY.

IT was not long after my encounter with Colonel Hewitt, that I set out one morn for the tailor's. My lord gave me permission to take Lasonde with me in case my French should fail me: and I was glad of him, for otherwise I should assuredly have been arrayed like the young French fops, whom I had seen about the Palais Royal when my lord was closeted with the Cardinal. I had hardly quitted the shop when mine eye fell on a young man walking down the street on the opposite side. Surely there was somewhat familiar to me in his stalwart figure. Then there arose before me a sweet English meadow, and a pleasant stream, and the fair tower of Magdalen College through the trees. I think the French folk around thought me mad, for I shouted "Beverley!" loud and joyously, as one might call to another on a Scottish moor, but not as one Frenchman greets another in the streets of Paris. But I cared not, for he stopped and fastened his blue eyes on me, and ere I reached him he knew me.



We walked together, talking and telling one another of all that had happened since we parted two years before. Then I prayed him to return with me to the Fleur-de-Lys, for I longed that he should see my lord; but he demurred, saying that he had been about to seek out an Englishman who was very poor to dine with him; for because his mother was permitted by the Parliament to still dwell at Beverley Hall and see after his estate he was in no want as were many of his countrymen. Money was not too plentiful among us (though I think we Scots can make it go further than the English), so I did not seek to deter him from his good intention, and ere I could say more he prayed me to be of the party.

I was, for the moment, uncertain whether or not to accept his offer, not knowing if my lord would want me. As I hesitated, I observed Killearn coming down the street arm in arm with a Frenchman of no reputation, whom he had taken to himself, though he dared not bring him to the Fleur-de-Lys.

"Excuse me for an instant, Beverley," I said, and hastening across the street to Robin, asked him if he was returning to our hostelry, and would tell my lord whom I had met.

"I go even now and will tell him," he answered. "But pray present me to your friend, Glenternie."

I was very reluctant to do so, and my heart sank within me when I noted the gravity of Ralph Beverley's face as he bowed distantly to Killearn.

"I trust I shall have the pleasure of meeting Captain Beverley ere long at the Fleur-de-Lys,"

quoth Robin, and off he went. We walked on for a space. Then Ralph asked,

"Is he a kinsman of yours?"

"Yes, he is," I answered regretfully.

"I met him last night. I was returning from the Louvre very late—my Lord Jermyn had kept me," observed Ralph.

I had remarked a very insolent look on Robin's face, such as had made me feel he was not meeting Beverley for the first time. I felt it was disloyal in me to denounce a kinsman to a friend of such short standing, but I could not endure that he should think my kinsfolk in general were men like Killearn, so I told him somewhat of Robin, and he said briefly,

"I deemed him such an one."

I had hoped he would tell me in what Robin was engaged the night before, for I was all agog to know. But neither then nor in after time when we were as brothers together did he refer to it again; and I did not care to put the question directly, for I perceived that he was not willing to speak evil of anyone.

Anon we paused at the top of a narrow lane with tall houses on either side.

"Will you go on to the Trois Rois?" said Ralph. "My friend lives down yonder in what is no better than a garret, and he will not like to have a stranger there."

I acquiesced readily, as I should have felt the same, and proceeded slowly to the change-house, where I seated myself at a table and wondered



whether the poor gentleman were as pleasant an Englishman as Ralph Beverley, or whether he were eaten up with pride like Colonel Hewitt or my Lord Jermyn. In any case, I reflected, he would be rejoiced at the sight of a good meal and good company, and I resolved to make myself in every way agreeable, though I would have rather been alone with my friend.

When they entered, Beverley led the way as was natural, so that I did not perceive who the stranger was till he stepped aside and said unto me,

"May I present you to my friend, Colonel Hewitt?"

I sprang up and glared at the Colonel, who smiled—yea, he merely smiled. I turned my back on him and addressed myself to Beverley.

"I cannot meet Colonel Hewitt," I cried. "But I suppose you knew not. I will not eat with him. I leave him to tell you why. I wish you a good-morrow," and, while Ralph gaped at me, amazed, I took up my hat and left them.

When I told my lord, he chid me gently, and bade me find where my friend was lodging, and bring him to dine or sup with us. But the few English gentlemen with whom I was acquainted knew him not, and when I met him again some days later he was with the Colonel, so I would not stop and speak, though I saw he was fain to do so. Several weeks thus passed ere I met him alone, and then I perceived that though he was the same to me myself, he was wondrously reluctant to come to the Fleur-de-Lys; doubtless Hewitt

had done his uttermost to poison his mind against Scottish Cavaliers. At last I prevailed on him to sup with us. He was very silent and shy, and I dreaded lest some mischance should befall, for my kinsmen never loved a stranger in their midst, and Uncle Patrick could rarely resist a jibe at an Englishman. But both my lord and Archibald were much taken with him from the first, and, thanks to them, the evening passed off pleasantly. Later, when I was walking back with him to his lodging, I poured into his ear all the tale of my duel with Colonel Hewitt.

"Doubtless," I concluded, "you have had another version from him."

"Yea, truly," quoth Ralph, laughing somewhat, "that I have. But I defended you to him most valiantly. And I must tell you, on the other hand, that the Colonel is not such as you deem him, but a man of parts and a most trusty friend, albeit soured by disappointment and sorrow."

"You will not be telling me that he—so gaunt and crabbed, and ill-clad as any Puritan—was ever in love?" I cried.

"Yet it was even so," answered Ralph. "And not only that—he had a young brother, dear to him as his own soul; the two were never apart, until the lad fell at Newbury. Prithee think not so hardly of the Colonel. He hath ofttimes been a good friend to me."

"I will mind what you have told me," I said; "but at present I abhor the man from my very soul. You see, he hateth my lord."



I looked questioningly at Ralph as I spake, and he understood.

"Methinks," he said, "your General hath a very noble face," and I returned home content.

I saw a good deal of Beverley for the next few months, and was sorry indeed when, one forenoon, he came to bid me farewell, for the Queen was sending him to the Hague with despatches and he was detained in Holland with Her Majesty's affairs for long.

In the following spring my lord received an invitation from the Emperor, so we left Paris and travelled through Switzerland and the Tyrol to the Imperial Court. Queen Henrietta had been bent on a Presbyterian alliance, and my lord could get no commission from her. Cardinal Mazarin had offered him employment, but the Marquis was loth to enter the French Service while there remained anything to be done for King Charles. The Emperor was more free with compliments and promises than aught else; still he made my lord a Field-Marshal, and moreover gave him leave to levy a regiment in the Low Countries, which, however, owing to the disturbed state of the country, it was never possible to do.

CHAPTER X.

TIDINGS FROM ENGLAND.

IN the autumn of 1648 we came to Brussels—a very beauteous city—and tarried there some months. My lord was in much despondency of heart. He did not talk to me anent the matter, but Archibald, who had bided at Paris by my lord's desire, and now came to us, told me somewhat; and, being much with Montrose, I would often hear what he said to Inchbraikie, or to my Lord Kinnoul, who had been with us in the earlier part of the war, and had now left Scotland to join us.

I have said before that my lord was sore grieved at obtaining no commission from Queen Henrietta, burning as he was to venture all again; so now he was hoping for leave to be up and doing from Prince Rupert or from the Prince of Wales, who, with the Chancellor, Sir Edward Hyde, was at the Hague, biding with his sister, the Princess of Orange, and her husband. My lord therefore writ to Prince Rupert, desiring to obtain an interview with him; but there was a mutiny in his fleet at the time, and the Prince dared not leave, though he wrote very heartily.



Tidings from England.

Soon after, my lord was cheered somewhat by a letter from the Prince of Wales, bidding him meet the Chancellor in some secret place, and lay before him his proposals for a descent upon Scotland. There were many Scotsmen dwelling in Holland, not all loyal exiles like ourselves, and had the Prince summoned my lord to the Hague, the tale would have been forthwith carried to Argyll's ears. It seems the counsellors of the young prince supposed it possible that the Covenanters might acknowledge their fault and support the King in the future. Surely a hope more vain and foolish never entered the heart of man! My lord hated secrecy above all things, and knew well that to come to honourable terms with Argyll was a thing impossible; but he arranged to meet the Chancellor at Sevenbergen, and we should have left for that place in a few days' time, when tidings came from England of the King's murder.

For many weeks we heard much to alarm us. His Sacred Majesty had been moved from one prison to another. Rumours had reached us that he had been called to a trial held by a court of Cromwell's summoning, but that we could not credit. Then for long we had heard naught, and my lord was consumed with anxiety. At last, about the second week in February, when I was going out one afternoon with my lord and Archibald, and Dr. Wishart, I heard a well-known voice in the passage without, asking if the Marquis of Montrose lodged here.

"It is Beverley," I said, and as I spake he was announced. I gaped upon him as he entered, for

his face was pale and set, and he looked like one in a dream. He went straight to my lord, and held out a letter, saying,

"From Sir Edward Hyde, sir."

My lord took it, and observing his looks, asked hastily as he tore open the note,

"The King? Is there ill news of the King?"

For a moment Ralph seemed unable to speak. Then he said "The King is at the Hague, sir." And we knew.

"How was it?" Dr. Wishart asked in trembling tones.

"They—they beheaded him," said Ralph hoarsely.

A great silence and horror fell upon us all. I looked at my lord. He had stood motionless, giving neither word nor sign. His eyes were fastened on the letter he held in his hand, but I perceived he read no word. Then on a sudden he fell back insensible. Inchbraikie lifted him on to a couch near. Anon he opened his eyes, and starting to his feet looked round on us as if he would have fain believed it all some evil dream, yet our faces told him it was not. Then an exceeding bitter cry broke from him.

"Would to God I had died at Philiphaugh! There is naught left to live for!"

Then up spake Dr. Wishart.

"There is vengeance, sir!" he cried. "Vengeance! Bethink you, the son of our murdered King liveth!"

"It is so," said my lord. "And here I vow before God, angels, and men, that I will dedicate



the remainder of my life to avenging this foul deed, and reinstating the Prince on his father's throne."

"Our swords and lives are at your service, sir!" we cried.

"I know it, my friends, I know it," he answered. "May it please Almighty God to bless our arms and grant us victory in this very crusade against the regicides."

He turned away and went upstairs, and none ventured to follow him.

"All I can say is," observed Inchbraikie grimly, "that unless Almighty God be pleased among Highland clans and Lowland nobles to work a marvellous miracle, our heads will all be on the Netherbow before another year be out."

"And if my lord's be there, sir," I cried, "where else should ours be?"

"Your are right there, Nigel," said Archibald. "But I pray you, Captain Beverley, tell us more, if you know it."

Ralph told all he could. But little more than the bare fact of the tragedy had reached the Hague when he left. Presently he went forth to seek a lodging, and I with him. We spoke much of the King, and Ralph told me many things about him, speaking in a voice he could hardly command of King Charles' personal kindness to him after his father had fallen at Edgehill.

For two days my dear lord bided alone in his room, and none of us dared intrude upon his grief. On the third day he came down as usual; but there

was henceforth on his countenance a tinge of sadness, and a look as of a man who seeketh a quest, who hath some great purpose to fulfil. Little he knew all his vow was to cost him!



CHAPTER XI.

GRAHAM TO THE RESCUE.

SOME days later we left Brussels. My lord was resolved to go to the Hague and pray the young King for leave to raise troops and return to Scotland. Schiedam (to which you remember the Stirlings had gone) was on the way, and we were to tarry a day or two there.

I was leading my lord's horse and mine own into the courtyard preparatory to our start, when Ralph rode up.

"May I come with you to the Hague?" he asked.

I turned to Montrose, who was standing at the door, having just paid our host.

"We shall be delighted to have Captain Beverley's company," quoth my lord.

Ralph bowed his thanks, and there was somewhat in the sorrow manifest in his face and the mourning-scarf on his arm that made Montrose step forward and hold out his hand, saying:

"Ah, young sir, you loved him too."

I felt, as Beverley grasped my lord's hand, that

the King's death would do much to break down the barrier between us Scots and the English Cavaliers; and I was right. That morning Ralph rode at my lord's side in very deep converse, and I knew they were talking of the late King. The following day he confessed to me that he understood why we all so loved my lord.

"Do you, indeed?" I said. "Time too, methinks. 'Tis a pity your countrymen understood it not in Paris."

"You gave us little chance," he observed. "Had you not thrust him down our throats well nigh at the sword's point we might have done so. But I do not wonder—he is a very knight of old romance—a man to live and die for!"

Thus the first Englishman "came in," as Uncle Patrick put it, and ere long we had more than enough of them.

By a strange chance we did not take the direct route to Schiedam (for my lord had letters from the Emperor for the Mayors of several Belgian towns with regard to the raising of troops), and so it was that we met with an adventure which affected my whole after life.

One fresh and frosty morning we were riding near the northern bank of the Rhine, about sixty miles from Schiedam, when there was a scuffle in the rear of our party, and Gilbert Menzies dragged forward an ill-looking knave, whom he had seen lurking in some bushes, knife in hand. We all questioned him, and Inchbraikie threatened him in English, French, broad Scots and Gaelic, so that we were seized with



laughter, and the poor loon was dumb with bewilderment. At length Montrose interposed and tried German, which he comprehended. He was a lean and hungry rogue, so we gave him meat and bread, my lord plying him with questions the while, and promising him, if he spake the truth, that he should go without scathe. Conceive our excitement when the fellow confessed that he belonged to a company of robbers, and at noon that very day they would fall on some travellers, whom they expected to pass not three miles away.

"Here is some work for us, my friends," quoth my lord, and we looked to our arms and rejoiced greatly.

We bribed the loon to lead us to the spot, and he took us to a thick copse, where a hundred men might have hidden unperceived. Before us was a broad, rough road, and on the other side was a wood where the freebooters were encamped. Pleasant was it indeed to be posted on duty again, and to hear our leader's words of command and encouragement.

After some time I, sitting in the boughs of a tree, saw approaching a little party, and called down softly to my lord below.

"They come, sir, they come—two ladies and some noble knight—now several more ladies and two or three gentlemen lightly armed—also some servant-knaves."

"Come down, if that is all," said my lord; and I descended and took my place behind him.

There was a shout, and a score of men leapt out from the wood opposite.

"Graham to the rescue!" we cried; and my lord shot forth as an arrow from a bow, and we at his heels.

Our sudden appearance took the rogues by surprise. There was a short fight, and then they made off. I perceived in dismay that my lord's sword arm was hanging useless at his side, and his blade was in his left hand; but he seemed hardly conscious of his hurt as he turned eagerly to the two ladies whom I had noted in the distance. Without doubt they were mother and daughter. The elder was a noble-looking woman, with lofty brow and mournful eyes that recalled to me the late King. She looked at my lord with a most captivating smile, and said:

"I have heard so much of the Great Marquis from Scottish exiles at the Hague, that I think you must be he?"

"And have I," said my lord, "the honour of addressing Her Majesty the Queen of Bohemia?"

Elisabeth of Bohemia! So this was the "Queen of Hearts," as men fondly called her, the sister of the murdered King, the mother of Prince Rupert, the lady with whom half the chivalry of Europe had been in love thirty years syne. Often had I heard my father speak of her charm and beauty, and though her face was very sad and worn, I could well see how beautiful she must have been and how charming she was still.

Then I heard the Queen say:

"May I present you to my daughter, Princess Louise?"



And I turned to look at the lady who rode near her, and was singularly attracted by her laughing dark eyes and winning manner. Meanwhile the Queen went on:

"You have been wounded, my lord, on our behalf. You must come back with us to Rhenen—'tis but five miles away—and tarry with us till you are well, and these brave gentlemen with you."

My lord looked doubtful, thinking to incommode them, as they were obviously leaving Rhenen; but the Queen would take no refusal, and mine uncle broke in, thanking her and saying that we must indeed tarry at the nearest village, for Montrose was in no condition to ride further. My lord frowned and signed to him to hold his peace, but the Queen said she loved to hear a kindly Scot's tongue, and that the Laird was entirely in the right. So my lord gave in, and rode on with the Queen, and was soon in deep converse with her, doubtless speaking of her brother.

I meanwhile found myself riding near a young maiden, whom I presently ventured to accost, and found her very willing to talk with me. I learnt that she was a niece of my Lord Craven, who had been the Queen's faithful servant and attendant for many years. In return I told her about my lord, and I have no doubt, a great deal about myself as well. I observed that she did her best to draw into the conversation a pale, sickly lad, who rode at her side, whom she addressed as "Hugh," and whom I gathered was her brother. You know the miniature of him, children; it hangs in your grandmother's

room—the lad in a green doublet with big, dark eyes, soft and timid as a maid's. I heard later, that his mother died at his birth and he had ever been small and weakly. His sister, on the other hand, was tall, rosy and strong, and could manage a horse and draw a bow twice as well as he could. Often have I seen my Lord Craven look at them with a sigh, as if to say, "Oh that Margaret had been the lad and Hugh the maid!"

When we arrived at Rhenen, Montrose bade most of our company go to an inn, fearing to trespass on the Queen's hospitality; for she—an exile like ourselves—was poor, and her little château would scarce have held us all. Only my Lord Kinnoul, therefore, and Archibald went with Montrose, and I also to attend upon my lord. Ralph Beverley had parted with us some days previously to return by a straighter route to the Hague.

I had been very anxious about my lord since the fight; and though Inchbraikie had bound up his arm and he had been talking away to the Queen, I saw, as he dismounted at Rhenen, that he was white to the lips with pain. The Queen sent a varlet flying for a leech who dwelt in the village, and the doctor and mine uncle together prevailed on my lord to go to his bed—for on such occasions he was far from docile, and ever desired to be up and about when he was not fit to lift his head from his pillow.

For a week we were at Rhenen. A certain gloom had been cast over all by the King's melancholy death, and we had no dancing nor entertainment,

yet it was beyond measure delightful. I would not own it even to myself, but there came to me a strange feeling of joy every time Mistress Margaret Craven thought fit to address me or even to look in my direction.

One evening I was writing a letter for my lord, he lying on the couch dictating it to me. I had made two mistakes, because my thoughts were far away, and then a foul blot because I had started when I heard a sweet voice singing on the stairs:

> "It fell about the Lammas-tide,
> When the muir men win their hay,
> The doughty Douglas bound him to ride
> To England to catch a prey."

"You will take a new sheet and begin afresh, Nigel," quoth my lord, with a little laugh, seeming more diverted than vexed. And as I obeyed he added, "I heard you singing 'Otterbourne' very well this morning; I suppose Mistress Margaret was playing for you?"

I admitted reluctantly that she was—in truth, we had been two hours at the spinnet.

"How are the mighty fallen!" said my lord softly.

"If you are meaning by that, sir, that I am in love with Mistress Margaret," I cried wrathfully, "you are greatly deceived. Often have I said to you, my dear lord, that I will wed no one, but ever bide with you, and I have moved in no wise from my purpose."

I saw by his face that my words did not convince him, and I vowed inwardly that in the two days that were left us at Rhenen I would keep myself—as far as might be with courtesy—from much intercourse with Mistress Margaret.

In the meantime I set my mind to the letter, so that in a very few minutes I said, "I have made the fresh copy, sir. What shall I write now?"

But my lord answered not. He was gazing into the garden, where the trees stood laden with snow, in a manner very unlike him. After a moment he turned his head and said:

"I was dreaming, Nigel, like you. We must to business."

Anon when the letter was done, it wanting yet some while to supper (which he took in private, with the Queen, the Princess, and my Lords Craven and Kinnoul), I brought a stool to his side and sat thereon, and said:

"Will it please you, sir, that I read, or shall we play chess?"

But he said, "Methinks we will talk, lad."

So we spake awhile of home, and of the boys at Kinnaird as was our wont, and then of the late King's Majesty. Then there fell a silence, which my lord broke by saying of a sudden:

"I cannot conceive, Nigel, how it is that Princess Louise hath remained so long unmarried."

"I hear, sir," I said, "that she will wed no one for rank and wealth, but only for love, and that he who dares aspire to her hand must be without fear and without reproach."

"Is it in truth thus?" said my lord musingly. "Perchance she tarrieth for her Ulysses."

"Perchance he hath come," I murmured, for Mistress Margaret and I had decided but the evening before which way the wind was blowing.

"What mean you, Nigel?" asked my lord; but the entrance of Inchbraikie at that moment saved me from further question.

Princess Louise was an artist, and a pupil of her mother's favourite, Gerard Honthorst, a very famous painter, whom I met later at the Hague. One room in the château was used by the Princess as a studio, and on our last evening I had the honour of being present—with other of my lord's followers—when Her Royal Highness did show us many paintings and drawings in chalk, which she had done with her own hands. I remember a sketch of Mistress Margaret, in the garb of a shepherdess, pleased me above all the rest; I could scarce take mine eyes off it while my lord did discourse most learnedly with the Princess on Raphael, Titian, Botticelli, and the like, which were but names to me.

Presently there followed a division of opinion on whether the Italian school or the Dutch were the greater, my lord being all for the Italian, seconded by the Queen, while the Princess declared she would rather live in a tavern with Franz Hals than in the Vatican with Raphael himself. She appealed to my Lord Kinnoul to take her part, but he replied that he had always been of two minds on the subject and could not say (speaking thus, I take it, because he would not side against

her). But in truth she was well able to hold her own, for she was of a very quick wit, and in the end she brought my lord to confess that there was real life in the Dutch pictures not always to be found in the Italian.

"But then, madam," suggested my lord, "is it the common life of every day that we want to see in art? Do we not rather need the ideal to uplift us? Is it not better to set before us the vision of a knight than a shop or counting-house? In what doth true art consist?"

And away they started again on an eager round of debate. Mistress Margaret was seated near me the while, and signed to me to look at a portfolio which was leaning against the wall, full of drawings. I raised it for her on to a little table, and we turned over a sheet or two softly. Then I stood as one dumb. On the sheet before me was the figure of my lord, marvellously portrayed. Mistress Margaret looked at it for a minute, and then up at me. I closed the portfolio hastily and replaced it, while she whispered,

"We must never speak of this to anyone. Now I know why Her Highness has been closeted here alone these two mornings. We should not have looked at these drawings, but I never thought——"

I promised I would hold my peace, but I went to bed that night in much exultation of spirit. That my lord loved the Princess I was almost sure; now I believed that she loved him also, and I hastened to build a castle in Spain, as the French say, in which the King enjoyed his own again, and



my lord was Viceroy of Scotland and wedded to the Princess Louise, and we were all at home once more. What joy it would be for the boys to dwell with their father at Kincardine again, and my lord would rejoice at last in the happy home life that had never been his lot. Doubtless also, Mistress Margaret Craven would still be one of her Royal Highness' ladies; and this pleasing thought led me on till I fell asleep.

We left Rhenen next day, and escorted the Queen and her party as far as Gouda, where the roads divided for Schiedam and the Hague.

"Au revoir, my lord," said the Princess, as he bent over her hand. "We will renew last night's debate at the Hague next week. I shall have Master Honthorst then for my ally, and together we will bring you to a capitulation."

"That will indeed be a new experience for the Great Marquis," said the Queen laughing, whereat my lord made her a deep bow and laughed also, and we went our several ways.

We drew rein at Schiedam that evening, and on inquiring for the Stirlings were directed along the canal for some way, and then to the left. My lord, who had been talking with Archibald, now called me to his side, and revealed to me a plan he had for Lilias.

It appeared that a German maiden, who had been in attendance on Princess Louise, had to return home because her old father was not like to live long, and Her Royal Highness had desired some other maiden to take her place for the time. My lord

had ventured to suggest Lilias, and the Princess had very willingly consented.

"So we will tarry here a day or two," concluded Montrose, "and Lilias shall ride with us to the Hague. I am glad indeed that I have been able to arrange this matter for her, since I had to refuse her request to go to Paris. It will be a very different matter for her to be with the Princess, and she will have the advantage of still being near Margaret." (For Schiedam is not twenty miles from the Hague.)

I was much pleased at the news, but I knew my fair cousin too well to suppose that she would be agreeable to leave for the Hague in forty-eight hours.

"Of a surety, sir," said I, "Lilias will want a score of new kirtles in which to go to court, and ruffles, and wimples, and such like frippery. She will never be ready so soon."

"Then we will give her four or five days," said my lord; and if needs be we will go without her, and Archibald shall ride over to fetch her when she is ready."

Lilias, however, was so full of joy at the prospect before her, that she and Margaret set themselves to have all things in readiness in a very short space; so that when we set out for the Hague some days later she went with us. It was always a great pleasure to me to be in her company, for we were very merry, as those can best be who have been children together; and we loved sometimes to talk of the old days at home, and of him who had been a brother to both of us.



Graham to the Rescue.

All the world was at the Hague, it seemed to me, as we entered the city one blustering March evening, and heard ever and anon from passers-by the tones of our northern tongue. Half a dozen times at least we were stopped by men whose faces were but dimly familiar to me, and there would be a "Welcome to the Hague, my lord!" and Montrose would rein in his horse, and tarry for a handshake and a talk, so that our progress was not rapid. Then there rode down the street a gentleman, young and very handsome, with two attendants. My lord, noting him, turned to Inchbraikie, and said,

"See you that, Patrick? I wonder how the sails are trimmed at present."

Mine uncle laughed grimly, and Lilias said,

"Who is that very gallant person, sir?"

"He is the Earl of Seaforth—the Chief of the Mackenzies," replied my lord."

"Surely he is no sour Covenanter?" she pursued.

"In truth, sweetheart," said my lord, "I could not to save my life declare to you the politics of my Lord Seaforth. He signed with me the Cumbernauld Bond and then renounced it. He swore to me at Kilcummin to fight for the King henceforth, yet at Auldearn he was with the rebels. He is a mystery."

As we advanced, Seaforth perceived us, and blushed, as well he might. But he rode up to Montrose and said,

"I trust, sir, we meet as friends, not foes."

"Doth not that depend on my Lord Seaforth?" returned the Marquis, yet in a very friendly tone.

"I am here," declared Seaforth, "to serve the King, and to die for him if need be."

"As long as you are of that opinion, sir," answered Montrose, "I shall account myself happy if you will call me your friend."

My Lord Seaforth bowed his thanks, greeted Archibald, and prayed to be presented to Lilias; and it was a full ten minutes before we were rid of him.

I heard Inchbraikie laughing softly to himself, and my Lord Kinnoul observed,

"I love not to be over-suspicious, but I would not give a groat for his brave words."

"It is Huntly over again," said my lord sadly. "It is these men, not the Covenanters, who ruin the cause. Yet peradventure this fearful calamity hath brought him to his senses. We will hope for the best, yet I would Pluscardine were the chief—he is worth a dozen of his brother."

"My lord Seaforth is an odious person," declared Lilias. And I remember, though he would fain have showed her some attention while he was at the Hague, she would have none of him. The Queen took to him greatly, and would call him "my Highlander," and in truth his person was very pleasing. But when we went on our last campaign Seaforth dangled at court, and the Mackenzies without him would not raise a finger—more especially as Pluscardine had attempted a premature rising, which had ended in disaster.

Ye will say that all this hath little to do with my tale, but I have set it down that those who read



may know what difficulties my lord had to contend against. With his enemies he could reckon; but it was by those who made pretence to be his friends that he was twice undone.

We rode on, looking for an hostelry, till we came to a park with trees and fountains, and grass well cut like the bowling green at Old Montrose. Out through the park gates came two gentlemen arm in arm, and my lord whispered to Archibald,

"Lanerick!"

"And that villain Lauderdale with him," added Kinnoul.

The Earl of Lanerick was brother to the Duke of Hamilton, who for many years had been the right hand of the late King in all affairs Scottish; and it was in great part owing to his evil counsels that there had ever been a breach between the King and his people. The Hamiltons had been from the first bitter enemies to my lord, fearing he would supplant them in the King's favour. While we were at Paris they had raised an army in Scotland—far larger than ever ours had been—to deliver the King, but they were thoroughly routed by Cromwell in Lancashire, and Hamilton had surrendered to him and was still a prisoner in England.

My dear lord, with the hope that his bitter quarrel with them might be healed for the sake of the cause, raised his hat. Insolent loons! All their acknowledgment of my lord's courtesy (and exceeding great condescension *we* thought) was for Lauderdale to turn to Lanerick with a sneering laugh. Montrose flushed a little at the insult, but,



raising his hand to stay the unsheathing of our half-drawn swords, rode quietly on. Our chagrin was increased by perceiving a few yards away my old antagonist, Colonel Hewitt. I writhed inwardly to think he should have seen the Marquis thus treated, and was not a little amazed when, after a moment's hesitation, he bowed respectfully to my lord—and he was not the first Englishman that day to do so. Mine uncle snorted as he rode beside me, and several of us exchanged glances. Times were changed indeed since English Cavaliers had jostled against us in the streets of Paris, and glared at us in the salons of the Louvre. Had they at last realised that the only hope of the royal cause was the chief of the Grahams?

We now observed a large inn not a hundred yards from the park. My lord drew rein.

"I should think this would suit us, my friends," he said.

"Highly convenient, James," quoth my uncle at the Marquis' elbow, with a glance at the palace, which we could see through the trees.

"Hold your peace, Patrick," answered my lord; but there was a light in his eyes that did my heart good to see.

With that we all dismounted, and took up our abode at the sign of the Brown Bear.

That evening my lord and Archibald took Lilias to the palace, where not only was our young King biding with the Prince of Orange, but the Queen and Princess Louise, who visited their kin at the Hague ever and anon. Her Royal Highness



received Lilias very kindly, the Queen also taking notice of her; and my kinswoman was soon happy in her new life, for she conceived much admiration and liking for the Princess, and a great intimacy arose between her and Mistress Margaret Craven, as I hoped it would.

Ere we had been a week at the Hague, news came from England of the execution of his Grace the Duke of Hamilton—no great loss to the cause. And hard on that came tidings from Scotland that Argyll had sent Huntly (his brother-in-law) to the scaffold. The Chief of the Gordons had died very gallantly it seemed, saying, "You may take my head from my shoulders, but not my heart from my sovereign." Had he lived in that spirit, methinks the royal cause had not been lost in the north.

The poor young King was distracted by his counsellors, each urging a different course. My lord desired him to go to Scotland with us, or, failing that, to Ireland with Prince Rupert's fleet, while we returned to raise the Royal Standard at home. My Lord Seaforth and others opposed the Marquis at every turn, yet mildly. Lanerick, now Duke of Hamilton, and the Earl of Lauderdale were very bitter against Montrose, and urged the King to make no decision and to give my lord no commission till the Scottish envoys, who were daily expected arrived with terms from Argyll.

CHAPTER XII.

CAVALIERS AND COVENANTERS.

NOT very long after our arrival at the Hague we were invited to sup at the palace with the Queen and the Princess — that is to say my lord was invited and bidden to bring as many of his friends as he pleased; so Kinnoul, Napier, and Inchbraikie went, and I also.

After we had supped the Queen withdrew into her private cabinet with my lord—doubtless to talk over matters of State. I had been speaking to Master Honthorst when Lilias touched my arm and whispered,

"Nigel, come hither."

Wondering, I obeyed, and followed her.

Drawing aside a heavy curtain we left the salon and came into a hall with a roof of glass, full of ferns and rare plants, which the Prince of Orange was wont to have brought him from the Indies.

"Wherefore so mysterious, Lilias?" I demanded.

"Her Royal Highness wants you—alone," she explained.

At that moment we came upon the Princess



Louise, seated beneath a giant fern in converse with her younger sister, Sophia, whom I had seen for the first time that evening. She was very beautiful, but being a stranger to us was more on her dignity with us than Princess Louise, and I did not like her so much. She rose now, and summoning Lilias, returned to the salon, leaving me alone with her sister.

"I desire some privy speech of you, Glenternie," said Her Highness, signing to me to sit beside her.

"Yes, madam," I answered, with a shrewd guess at what it might be.

"You know well," she began earnestly, "that Argyll's agents will be here soon, and that already there are some of your countrymen here who hate Montrose. As you value your General's life, I pray you take heed."

I was startled at the gravity of her tone, and noted how pale she was.

"In truth, madam," I made answer, "'tis no easy matter to guard my lord, for he is very heedless of danger."

"I can well believe it," she replied, "but you will do your best, will you not? I do not speak without real knowledge. The King and my mother will both warn the Marquis, but it seemed to me that to warn his friends would be more effectual."

"You are right, madam," I replied. "With your permission I will speak to mine uncle of this matter. He will arrange that my lord shall be specially guarded."

"Perchance you had better tell Colonel Graham"

(she spake reluctantly); "but understand, Glenternie, not a word of our converse to-night is to reach Montrose's ears, either through you or Inchbraikie."

"No, madam," I replied demurely; and then, raising the flap of my doublet, I showed her a loaded pistol, which I had carried at my belt ever since we had come to the Hague. She smiled, well pleased, and with that we passed back into the salon.

As I drew the curtain for the Princess the outer door of the chamber opened to admit the young King, arm in arm with my lord. "The King!" How strange it seemed—this swarthy lad, two years my junior, unlike his father in every way. Following him was Ralph Beverley, and anon I made my way to his side. He laid his hand on my arm and whispered,

"Who is that wondrously fair maiden there? Know you?"

"The tall one with brown locks and rosy cheeks, mean you?" I asked. "That is Mistress Margaret Cra——"

"No, no," he interposed; "the little one with auburn hair and wondrous grey eyes like Montrose's. Who is she?"

"Oh, that is Lilias," I answered. "Lilias Napier. I have often spoken to you of her."

For my part I had resolved at Schiedam that the love of no lady should ever assail my heart. For my noble lord and for him alone would I live and die. Therefore I was exceedingly annoyed that there came to me a sudden sense of relief when I found



that the object of Ralph Beverley's admiration was not Mistress Margaret—as if, in good sooth, it mattered aught to me.

That he would ever dare—a plain, country gentleman, untitled, and an Englishman to boot—to lift his presumptuous eyes to the daughter of Lord Napier of Merchiston, and the niece of the Great Marquis, was a thing of which I did not dream, or never should I have led him across the room and presented him—blushing like a maid—to my fair cousin. Lilias had heard of him from me, and now took him in at a glance, looking him through and through with those bright grey eyes of hers. I saw Ralph was far too shy to do himself justice; but my lord summoned me at that instant to admire a drawing of Master Honthorst's, so that I had to leave him to my cousin's mercies.

"Prithee, Nigel," she said when I bade her farewell that evening, "spare me introduction to other of your English friends, be they all so great and heavy."

Yet I observed her a moment later, with the tail of my eye, glance across to where Ralph Beverley was standing, in a way that made me think he was more pleasing to her than she chose to admit.

A few days later the Covenanting Commissioners arrived, the Earl of Cassilis, the Rev. Robert Baillie, and others; and one morning soon after my lord was summoned to a meeting of the King's Council. On our way to the palace, Beverley overtook us, and seeing him, Kinnoul whispered to Ralph and me,



"Follow me into the Council, and do not go unless the King himself sends you out."

As he spake I observed the Princess coming alone out of a great hot-house near by—for we were crossing the park. She was going towards the palace, but tarried when she saw us. My lord bowed low, and so did we.

"Good morrow," she said. "Come you to see my mother thus early?"

"Nay, madam," Montrose made answer; "we should scarce intrude on Her Majesty at this hour. We go to a Council meeting."

The Princess looked at him, her fair face troubled.

"Prithee, my lord," said she, "be very wary. My mother and I fear for you much among those men."

"Your Highness need have no fear while my brave friends are with me," said Montrose, with so confident a smile that the Princess smiled also and said,

"Doubtless you are right there, my lord."

With that we were about to pass on when one of the flowers dropped from her basket and my lord stooped to pick it up for her. Then, because he loved flowers overmuch, he must needs smell it, and look upon it covetously.

"May I have it, madam?" he asked.

"One you may certainly have," she said; "but there are better ones than that. You shall take your choice."

"Your Highness shall choose for me," he said.

"*Then* I will give you this exceeding fair one,"

quoth she, and taking his hat from his hand, secured it behind the buckle.

"There, my lord," she said returning it to him, "a sweet gift! I trust you are properly grateful."

I could only just hear his answer, for he spoke in a low voice, as for her ear alone; but I think he said,

"Sweet in sooth, and may I say doubly sweet because of the giver?"

She did not answer, but smiled on him and let him take a kiss at her hand. Then it was that I perceived a face watching them with a very evil look from a window in the palace. It was the Earl of Lauderdale's. He caught mine eye and withdrew his head. Then Her Royal Highness went through a side door to the Queen's apartments, and we passed on to the great entrance.

I was gratified to note that in the hall, where many English Cavaliers as well as Dutch gentlemen were sitting about and talking in little groups, there were few Englishmen who did not bow to my lord, while several came up to speak to him. Then he went into the King's private cabinet, while Beverley and I followed Kinnoul, Napier, and Inchbraikie into a spacious panelled chamber where the Council meeting was to be held.

Ralph and I stood quietly in the embrasure of a window, and amused ourselves by watching the gentlemen who were assembling.

There were about half a dozen English noblemen, notably the young Duke of Buckingham, lolling in a chair at the table, and the Marquis of Newcastle,

who had been curator to the King in his childhood—a man of very stately carriage, but no soldier, as I could see at a glance—it was he who had lost the North of England for the King. The Chancellor, Sir Edward Hyde, was there also—a grave, courtly man, who could never quite overcome his English dislike of my lord. Then there were mine own countrymen with the air of hungry wolves in sight of their prey, all hand and glove against my lord, though formerly there was much enmity between the Engagers (Lauderdale and Lanerick) and the Covenanters.

Presently the King entered by a private door, followed by my lord, and said,

"Good morrow, gentlemen. Let us at once to business," and they who had been standing about the room moved towards the table, while my lord took his seat at the young King's right hand, as a man who has won his right to the place. For the King's sake he was ready to offer friendship to those proud lords who had wronged him and sought to blacken his reputation; but it was not in his nature to lay aside what he felt to be his just claims before men who had sat idle while he had fought, or who had been in actual arms against him. Had he thrown down his gauntlet to the Covenanters his action could not have been more expressive. Up rose our countrymen as one man.

"Your Majesty, my lords, and gentlemen," said Lauderdale, "I must request that, ere we proceed, James Graham be asked to remove his person from *the room.* He is a man unworthy to come near your



Majesty, or into the society of good men, because he is excommunicated by the Kirk."

For a moment there was a great silence. Then the King said,

"And *we* must request, my lord, that if you refer to the Marquis of Montrose you speak of him accordingly."

"Pardon me, sire," replied the Earl; "your Majesty forgets that his title and estates are forfeit."

"For what?" demanded the King. "By whom?"

"By the Estates of Scotland, sire," returned Lauderdale, "and not without good cause, for his treason and his bloody wars which have desolated the country."

"Sire," added Cassilis with a tragical air, "our homes have been in flames, our lands laid waste to glut the evil ambition of this——"

"Confound you!" thundered Inchbraikie, who could contain himself no longer. "What of the bonnie house o' Airlie? What of Menstrie? Keep your ain breath to cool your ain porridge!"

"Gentlemen, gentlemen!" cried the King, "you forget yourselves. Ye are come here to serve me, not to brawl over the Marquis of Montrose. I should not have asked him hither to-day but that the success of my cause lies in his hands, and I believe lies not in vain."

"Your Majesty knoweth not this man," urged Lauderdale. "Already he hath ruined your father by his boundless pride and ambition, and his cruelty in the past war——"

"By Heaven!" broke in Kinnoul, "have we come here to listen to foul slander? I trow not!"

If the quiet Earl could be thus roused, what wonder that my fiery old uncle drew his sword, and that Archibald, Ralph, and I followed his example? Half a dozen blades flashed forth from the other side of the table.

"Am I not King even here?" cried Charles, and he turned to Montrose.

My lord had sat him calmly throughout the hubbub, interested but silent, waiting for the appeal which he knew must come when matters arrived at a deadlock—and therein lay a parable for those who could read it.

Now he rose.

"Sheath your swords, my friends," he said, and we obeyed, for his tone was one which would brook no refusal.

"Have I your Majesty's permission to say a few words?" he asked.

"Say on, my lord," quoth the King.

Never shall I forget the scene as my lord faced the Council with eyes that gave the lie to the false accusations hurled upon him, caring not to justify himself before such men, far less to attack them, and with only one thought in his heart.

"Here we stand wrangling," cried my lord, "and the cause is at stake! My lords and gentlemen, Scotsmen and Englishmen, I appeal to you as fellow-countrymen, and as fellow-subjects, to lay aside personal, national, and religious prejudices,



and to unite with me in that which we have so much at heart, in that which I conceive to be our highest duty—to organize an expedition against those who have been instrumental in the death of our martyred sovereign. Only one thing can secure to us the victory (under God), and that is hearty, loyal co-operation. My liege, my sword and life are at your service—are you with me, gentlemen?"

"We are, my lord!"

The words rose as one voice from every Scottish and English Cavalier in the room, but not so from our countrymen.

"Sire," said Cassilis, "we must withdraw from your Majesty's presence. With the Graham here we must consider all negociations closed, and shall return to Edinburgh without delay."

Secretary Nicholas leant across the table and whispered somewhat in the royal ear.

"One moment, gentlemen, I entreat you," said the King. "A word with you, Montrose."

He led the Marquis aside, and they spoke together in low tones for a minute. Then my lord signed to us to follow, and out he went.

"The King will see us alone, George, this afternoon," I heard him say to Kinnoul. "We are to hear Argyll's terms, and thereon advise him."

* * * * * *

For two months King Charles meditated over those terms, which I confess it seemed to me—and seems still—that no honest man could have con-

sidered for an hour. True, the acceptance would have secured him his Scottish crown and an army wherewith to fight for his English one, but at what a cost! He must needs sign the Covenant, which would have made him a tool of Argyll and the Kirk, not only become a Presbyterian himself (contrary to the usage of his family), but enforce Presbyterianism throughout his domains—on English Episcopalian and Irish Papist, forsooth! Finally, he must dismiss from his service my lord and other lesser "Malignants," who had left children, home, and country for his sake.

As the weeks went by, the Commissioners would not abate one jot of these monstrous terms, and their foolish violence against Montrose so angered His Majesty that he gave ear more and more to my lord, who urged that to agree to such a peace meant shame and ruin (as was later shown to be the case), and prayed the King to trust to God and the righteousness of his cause. It soon became an understood thing that Montrose had been practically promised a commission, and the very thought cheered our hearts. There was, however, no English expedition in view, and thus many English gentlemen came to offer their swords to my lord—as was very natural and proper—but it tried us beyond measure. Englishmen swarmed round my lord in the palace, Englishmen were for ever stopping him in the street, Englishmen were for ever invading the Brown Bear.

"The devil take them, *I* say," quoth Inchbraikie, and truth to tell, there was scarce a Scot in my



lord's service who did not in his heart re-echo the words.

Ere we had been three weeks at the Hague, Ralph Beverley had—at the Marquis' request—taken up his abode at the Brown Bear. I had grown to love him very dearly, yet it tried me to see him dangling at my lord's heels, and to hear the Marquis calling him "Ralph."

Then there was Colonel Hewitt. If we detested one Englishman more than another, it was that gaunt, sneering Colonel. Never did I see him but those foul words rose in my memory: "A conceited young coxcomb, for ever swaggering at his heels." Beverley always maintained that he was a right good man at heart, and as true a gentleman as anyone in the Hague, whereat we would jeer and call upon Killearn to imitate Hewitt's stiff gait and haughty bearing, which I may say he did to perfection.

One evening I was enjoying a game of chess with Dr. Wishart, when the door opened and in came Beverley, followed by none other than Colonel Hewitt himself, in the big riding boots and plain grey doublet that he wore everywhere. It was the first time he had set foot in the Brown Bear, and he must have thought proverbial Scottish hospitality a farce, for he was received in absolute silence. Ralph coloured and the Colonel scowled.

"Good evening, sir," said Dr. Wishart, with an effort to speak pleasantly.

The Laird of Claverhouse was sitting in the window with a book. He glanced up, echoed the good doctor's greeting, and returned to his volume.

"Good evening, gentlemen," said the Colonel. "I regret to intrude, but I desire speech with my lord marquis, if he be in and disengaged."

"Run up and tell my lord," said Dr. Wishart to me. "He has only Napier with him, and methought he was expecting the Colonel."

So I went up, and my lord said,

"Good. I have every hope that he has come to offer me his sword for the campaign."

"But, sir," I cried, dismayed, "we all hate him. There will be naught but eternal brawling if he joins himself to us."

Montrose laid a hand on my shoulder and made me walk with him to the head of the stairs.

"What are personal likes and dislikes," he asked, "when we are fighting for the King? My boy, you can help me much if you will try to make matters go smoothly between the younger members of our party and these Englishmen—if not for the King's sake, why then, for mine."

I could but say that I would endeavour to do as he desired, and I followed him downstairs. He asked the Colonel to come into the garden with him; for half an hour they walked to and forth, talking much, and then returned to the house.

"Colonel Hewitt will stay to supper, my friends," quoth my lord, as if naught could please us more. "I am happy to say he hath volunteered his services for this expedition."

We sat down to our evening meal, and certes it was no fault of my lord's if all did not go as pleasantly as usual. Kinnoul and Archibald seconded



him most gallantly, and so also did Dr. Wishart, but there was a sense of discomfort within me, at least, and conversation was an effort. Inchbraikie for one could never endure the Colonel, and would scarce utter a word the whole evening. When Hewitt had gone my lord betook himself to his chamber, ill-pleased, as well he might be, with several of his followers. Up went mine uncle after him, and we in the room below heard high words and much pacing about. We could only surmise what had happened when the Laird came down the next morning. He was very surly to us, but to my lord exceeding respectful and affectionate, and when we met the Colonel in the street that day, for the first time Inchbraikie's hat was grudgingly raised, and he grunted a good morrow.

In plain words, we were all jealous. Montrose was ours, and we hated to see so much as a smile bestowed elsewhere, which, when you remember our conduct in Paris, was surely most unreasonable.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE PRINCESS' HAND.

EARLY in May, when we were getting used to English officers in and out of the Brown Bear, I went to my lord's chamber one night to see if I could do anything for him—as was my custom ere I retired to bed. I knocked, and on hearing no answer, I entered, thinking perchance he was deep in a book. At once I perceived that somewhat was amiss, for he was sitting at the writing-table, paper and pen untouched before him, his head resting in his hands. Inchbraikie stood beside him, speaking in tones which he used to none save my lord.

"Tell me, James," I heard him say gently; "she hath not refused you? I cannot believe it."

My lord raised his head.

"Nay, not that," he answered; "but I must give her up, Patrick. The King says he loves her."

I slipped away quietly, knowing I should not be there, and went to my room in great disturbance of mind. For a week my lord never went near the Princess. The Queen was ill, which served as an excuse, and when he met her in the park he



passed her with merely a bow. I sought in vain to glean information from mine uncle and Archibald, but no word would they say. None other (save my Lord Kinnoul, methinks) knew aught of the matter, beyond what they could surmise. I longed to discuss the business with Ralph, but felt that what I had overheard I had scarce a right to hand on. There was only one with whom I could speak freely, and that was Lilias; but it was not easy to have privy speech with her, though I could see her every day, if I desired, in the room where the Queen's ladies sat.

On the following Sabbath, however, I bethought me of an opportunity, and went to evening service at the Royal Chapel. As she passed me to go out I plucked her gown, and observed with satisfaction that she lingered behind. Anon we stood alone together, and I said hastily,

"Lilias, I must have one word with you."

"Yea," said she, "I have sorely longed to see you privily, Nigel. What is this coil? What meaneth it? Mine uncle no longer seeks the Princess' hand."

"And for good reason," I answered. "Know you that the King hath intent to make her his Queen?"

Lilias pondered for a moment, then she said,

"You have no wit, Nigel. The Scots Commissioners have observed Montrose—he doth not hide his courting under a bushel. They will carry the tale to Argyll's ear, and all negociations will be closed without doubt. Would the Covenanters have a King, think you, who had permitted the accursed—what was their choice phrase—that 'viperous brood

of Satan' to become his kinsman, to ally himself with the blood royal? And so the King hath taken means to stop Montrose in his intention."

"But," I cried, "the King is about to dismiss the Covenanters and give my lord his commission."

"The King is about to give Montrose a commission," she admitted, "but—you are no statesman, Nigel, and I cannot tarry longer to propound the matter to your dull brain. I must needs attend on Her Royal Highness now."

We passed out, but at the foot of the staircase she paused an instant and whispered,

"'Twill all come right in the end, Nigel, I have no doubt—if not before mine uncle goes, why then when he returns; for she loveth him, I am sure, and will not endure the King—even to be Queen of Great Britain."

When he returns! That might be in two or three years at the least, peradventure five or six. Could it be that the Princess would remain true to him, when no word had been spoken, when he had—did she guess it was for the King's sake—resolutely avoided her? It seemed all very hard, very contrary, and my hope was that when the Queen was about again, she might perceive how matters stood, or it might be even that the King would be driven to press his suit on the Princess to quiet the Covenanters, and if she would have naught of him, he could hardly contrive to stand in my lord's way.

Some three weeks—or it might be more—after my converse with Lilias, I had been playing tennis with Ralph in the courts at the palace, and was



taking a turn with him up and down the terrace before we went back to the Brown Bear. We could speak of little else save the coming campaign, for at last the Covenanters had been dismissed, and their ship was said to have weighed anchor two or three days before. As we thus walked together King Charles came on to the terrace, and I noted a rueful look on his face as he slipped his arm, with his wonted familiarity, into the young Duke of Buckingham's, and strolled past us.

"My dear George," we heard him say, "for pity's sake give me your comfort and counsel. Never hath suitor been sent about his business in so summary a fashion as I was to-day. Mine aunt well-nigh boxed my ears, and my cousin——"

But though I listened to the uttermost I could catch no more. Presently they turned and came again in our direction, and the King beckoned to us. We advanced, I for one bursting with curiosity.

"Will one of you gentlemen go across to the Brown Bear? I want to see the Marquis at once," said the King.

I trow we needed no second bidding. A quarter of an hour later my lord met his sovereign on the terrace, and Beverley and I had perforce to retire out of hearing. The King's urgent business was not long adoing, and anon my lord turned his steps to the Queen's apartments—the first time for a month.

Later a page brought me a message that Montrose was supping with the Queen, and would not be home till twelve, so rather before that hour I left the inn and made my way across the park. I had barely

reached the palace when the side door opened and a man stepped quietly out. He did not pass me, but took another path and disappeared in the darkness. Idly wondering who he was and what was his errand, I walked up and down and soon forgot him, for my thoughts were full of my dear lord.

At last the door opened again, and forth he came.

"You here, Nigel—and so late? Methinks I might have returned unattended for once."

"Not so, my dear lord," said I, glancing keenly at his face, for his alteration in manner was most apparent. Of late he had striven to be cheery, but could not disguise from those who loved him his exceeding sorrow of heart. Now I perceived in an instant all was as of old, and he answered my questioning look forthwith.

"You may wish me joy, lad," he said. "The Princess is mine."

With all my heart I did so, and then we turned to go back to the inn.

I sit in my study now in a newly built Glenternie. My fighting days are over. I have served under half the generals in Europe, but there is only one commander for me, and as I look back over forty years to the days of my first exile there cometh upon me the memory of those evening walks with my lord at the Hague—from the palace to our hostelry, under the starry sky. Ah, what would I not give for it now! Yet I think 'twill not be long ere again I feel the clasp of his hand in brotherly love and friendship—and in that hope I thank God for the past and take courage.



That night proved an eventful one. My lord spake to me as we walked along, very freely of his love for Princess Louise, seeking, doubtless, to draw from me a confession that I was in a like state anent Mistress Margaret Craven; and perchance I could have brought myself to tell him, but as we neared the palace gates a shot rang out on the still night air. My lord laid a hand on the railing as if to steady himself, while I slipped out my pistol, and, marking a dark something vanish in a bush, I fired. There was a groan, and a heavy fall. Then I turned to Montrose, who had held his handkerchief for a minute to his head, and as he took it away I saw that it was stained with blood.

"It is naught, Nigel," he said; "but a narrow escape, truly."

I ran to the bush, and pulled out the fellow by the leg. He was dead—which was more due to good luck than to skill on my part, and I could have sworn as I looked at his face in the moonlight that I had seen him in attendance on Lauderdale more than once. I returned to my lord, and told him, and then taking my arm he walked on to the Brown Bear, where his appearance produced no little consternation. I noted that Ralph and Colonel Hewitt (who only the day before had come to lodge at our inn by my lord's desire, because he was so poor), were as much perturbed as any of us.

A dozen chairs were pulled out for my lord, and food was pressed upon him from all sides. I, on the contrary, was anything but the hero of the hour. Inchbraikie turned on me savagely as soon as I had related all.

"You feckless loon," he cried, "can you take no more care of my lord than that? Wherefore did you not stop and challenge the fellow who came out from the palace? Doubtless it was the same."

"And how was I to know?" I began angrily, for I hated mine uncle to blame me, even if it were deserved—which it was not.

"Patrick, Patrick!" said my lord, "you know not what you say. Nigel was most prompt and alert, and thereby doubtless saved me from a second shot, which might have proved fatal."

"Would we had been there, sir!" cried several voices.

"And if you had, my friends," answered my lord, smiling at their eager faces, "ye could have done no more than the boy did. It is naught—a mere scratch."

"A mere scratch, forsooth!" repeated Inchbraikie indignantly. "You will come to bed at once, James, and let me see to you, and look you, gentlemen, so long as we rest in this benighted place my lord hath a second attendant within call, as aforetime."

"Certainly it must be so," quoth my Lord Kinnoul decidedly, while we all assented.

"What means this?" demanded Montrose. "Two attendants as aforetime? Never have I had more than one."

"True, one always attends you, sir," explained Archibald. "But, though you know it not, another is ever within earshot."

"And may I ask," cried my lord, "who made this arrangement?"



They all looked at me, whereat I spake up joyously.

"My lord," I said, "methinks I may tell you now, though at the time I promised her to say naught."

"Her?" cried my lord, laughing. "And how long has this been in force?"

"Well-nigh three months, sir," quoth I, and then we all laughed.

"James," interposed Inchbraikie, who had kept his hand on my lord's arm all this time, and was fuming impatiently at his dallying. "You are in no fit state to stand about thus."

"One moment, Patrick," said my lord, and he turned him to us. "My friends," quoth he, "I have some news for you. I think you must all know that I love Princess Louise. The King also loved her, but she would not have him, and His Majesty most generously forbore to press his suit, and even wished me good luck with mine. I have been to the Princess this evening, and—she loveth me. But His Majesty hath required one thing of me—that until I return from Scotland this matter should not be made known. I am sorry that it should be so, but the King must be obeyed. He gave me leave to tell my special friends, whose silence I could vouch for, and," he glanced round, "ye are all my special friends here, so have I your word that what I have told you to-night goes no further than yourselves?"

"You have, my lord," said they; but they did not like it, nor in truth did I.

My Lord Kinnoul came forward and wrung his General's hand, "I wish you joy, Montrose," he said,

and so did they all, after which Inchbraikie marched my lord off to his chamber. I felt now at liberty to discuss the matter fully with Ralph—and we lay awake till cockcrow talking of it. Surely the King's attentions to Princess Louise had been a matter of policy—though he had succeeded in disguising the fact from my lord. Ralph, indeed, told me that the English Cavaliers believed the King to be courting Princess Sophia at this very time, and ere we left the Hague the match was openly talked of. I would it had come to pass, for, methinks, it might have been the saving of the King, ay, and of us too, and the Queen, doubtless for these very reasons, was eager for it, but Her Royal Highness would in no wise consent.

It was not to be wondered at that the following morning the Marquis woke with so severe a pain in his head that the Laird persuaded him to remain in bed till mid-day. Longer than that he would not stay, for there was a Council meeting an hour after noon, and he had promised to go to his Princess.

"Nigel," said mine uncle to me after we had broken our fast, "you may go up to Montrose now, but have a guard on that wagging tongue of thine, and tire him not with silly chatter."

I found my lord with his head bandaged, writing busily—I guessed to whom.

"Call Rudolf," said he. "I desire to send this to the palace."

Ralph was passing outside, and heard the words.

"Can I take it, sir?" he asked, stopping at the



door; then he coloured and half drew back, as if he wished he had not spoken.

"Yea, by all means, Ralph. Thank you very much," said my lord. "Will you please see Her Royal Highness yourself, and explain that I am only here to content Patrick."

Beverley took the note and went. I closed the door behind him, and sat me down on the edge of the bed.

"Now, Nigel," quoth my lord, "I wish to have a word with you about Ralph Beverley. There is somewhat amiss with him."

"I was coming to you about it, sir," I said; "only lately I have not—not cared to trouble you with such matters. He is in love."

"So I thought. And with whom? Lilias?"

"Even so, sir," I answered. "I am very sorry for him, but if he will set his heart on one so far above him he has only himself to blame if he is unhappy."

"And Lilias?" pursued my lord, "doth she love him, think you?"

"I know not, sir," I said. "I almost fear she doth, but of course she would not have a word to say to him, seeing it is impossible."

"Wherefore impossible?" asked my lord. "I see no great obstacle. True her rank is higher, but I for one could scarce raise an objection on such ground."

I had never dreamed of my lord being agreeable to the match, though I knew he entertained a great regard for Ralph. I considered the matter for a



space, and the more I thought of it the better it pleased me.

"My lord," I said at last, "if indeed it may be so, can I speak with Ralph about it, and urge him to press his suit, for he is so shy that he hath got no further now than he had the first evening he met her? In truth, my lord, you would——"

"Nigel, you young fool!" and mine uncle caught me by the ear, having entered unobserved. "Your tongue is clacking like some old village dame's over her knitting, and my lord is looking exceeding tired. Out with you!"

So I must needs go—much annoyed at mine uncle's interference.

"Do as you say, my lad," said Montrose as I departed, "and send Ralph to me some time to-day."

Talk of *my* tongue! Five minutes later from my little room next door I heard the Laird storming round my lord's chamber, while such expressions reached my ears as "the honour of the Grahams," "only an Englishman," from which I gathered that there was a great passage of arms going on between Montrose and Inchbraikie on the subject of Ralph and Lilias. Nor was mine uncle alone in his opposition. Archibald, as more nearly concerned, had much to say, but my lord carried through the matter with a high hand as was his wont.

Ralph Beverley's gratitude to him knew no bounds. He had worshipped hopelessly and desperately from a distance, and now my lord's favour and countenance put fresh heart into him, but he was beyond measure shy and bashful, and Lilias'



ready tongue was somewhat too much for him, so that I was far from surprised when, the evening before we quitted the Hague, he confessed to me that he had just done the fatal deed, and that Lilias would have none of him. I would I could have done his wooing for him, and I told him so. I trow I would have made short work of it. I did my best to console him, and still bade him hope, while my lord promised to send him with despatches to Rhenen when the Queen retired thither, as she would do before long.

We, meanwhile, were divided. My lord was about to accompany the King as far as Breda (for His Majesty was going to visit Queen Henrietta at St. Germains, and then pass over to Jersey, where he could conveniently join Prince Rupert's fleet and cross to Ireland). With my lord went Kinnoul, Inchbraikie, Beverley, and one or two other gentlemen, while the rest of our company was to tarry at the Brown Bear till my lord's return.



CHAPTER XIV.

A YOUNG FOOL.

I ROSE early the day we were to leave the Hague, and was about to quit the little chamber I shared with Ralph when there was a tap at the door, and opening it I saw Colonel Hewitt standing outside.

"The Marquis desires to speak with you, Glenternie," he said in a voice unusually pleasant, and then passed on while I sought my lord.

"Nigel," quoth he as I entered his room, "cast your mind back to your journey to Oxford four years ago. What was the name of the youth who harboured you one night, and whose father was a Roundhead Colonel?"

"Warden, sir—Geoffrey Warden."

"I deemed that was the name," said my lord "'Tis passing strange. Would you believe it, Nigel, he is under this roof now?"

I was amazed, and my lord said,

"Colonel Hewitt came to me but a few minutes since, to tell me of a young kinsman of his, who had been disinherited by his father for his loyalty, and



had come to the Hague. The lad it seems found his way here last night when we were at the palace, weak and well-nigh starving."

"Oh, sir!" I cried. "Just think, that sour old Colonel must be the Royalist cousin of whom Warden spoke so much. Who could have believed it?"

My lord frowned a little.

"The Colonel is neither sour nor old, Nigel," he said gravely, whereat I answered naught but looked out of the window. "I grieve to think," he went on, "that you should still cherish your old grudge against Colonel Hewitt. I fear me there was overmuch truth in his words at Paris, or they would not rankle so. I desire now to leave you here for a week to befriend this poor lad; but I must have your word first that you will behave yourself more modestly and respectfully towards your elders. I will tell you frankly, Nigel, I have not been overpleased with you of late. You will take no counsel and receive no commands from anyone but me, and more than one complaint hath reached my ears of your self-sufficiency and discourtesy."

I muttered an apology—sulkily enough, I fear. I knew that everyone of my lord's words was true, and more. I was in a strange mood in those spring months, for the bright, sweet face of Mistress Margaret Craven haunted me by night and day. I was as love-sick as a boy could be, yet my pride forbade me to acknowledge it. I little knew that Montrose, who could read my mind like an open book, and was well aware of my state, was constantly

making excuses to my fellow-cavaliers for my shortness of temper, and was daily hoping that I might come to him about the matter.

As soon as my lord had left that morning, I went to Colonel Hewitt's chamber to seek Geoffrey Warden. It appeared that he had been robbed of his money on his way to Holland, and had perforce to lodge in a very poor part of the city, where he had caught a fever. One evening he had perceived Colonel Hewitt passing in the street below his garret-window. He had pursued him, but had not sufficient strength to catch him up till the Colonel had reached the Brown Bear. I could hardly recognise in the lank, pale youth lying on the bed the round-faced, rosy-cheeked laddie I had met in England. He seemed very pleased to see me and prayed me to tell him all my adventures since we had parted on the road to Oxford.

For the best part of an hour I entertained him with them, and he in return told me of his trouble at home. Since he had refused to accept a commission in the rebel army, Colonel Warden had offered to send him to a foreign university, but Geoffrey had insisted on fighting for the King, and so, when he came of age, he and his father had parted in anger, and the boy, with a little money his mother gave him, had started for the Hague, where he hoped to find his kinsman. I could see what it had cost him to leave home and brave his father's displeasure, and I was resolved that I would be his friend and do my best to make him happy in his new life. It would be very pleasant, I reflected, to have



someone in my lord's following younger than I, and doubtless he would be most grateful for my friendship. As I thought thus he remarked,

"I saw a cousin of yours last night, but I think he hath gone with the Marquis now. I cannot tell you how much I liked his face. Guy called him 'Killearn.'"

"I hardly think," I said, "that Colonel Hewitt will care for you to know him."

"Guy said he was rather——" and Geoffrey stopped at a loss for a word.

"Well, he is rather wild," I explained. "In fact, that is a charitable way of expressing it."

"I like him though," answered the lad with decision. "He hath such a handsome face, and he spake so kindly to me."

I shrugged my shoulders. New-comers always liked Robin, and young Warden would soon learn what he was, and see that perchance the only good in that wayward heart was that he really loved Montrose. I forget whether it were at Paris or the Hague, but I remember well how I woke one night to hear some movements in the next room, which was my lord's; then the door opened and he went downstairs. Then I heard another door below and a step on the cobbled street. Marvelling what might be afoot, and sure that my lord should not be alone at such an hour, I hastily donned some clothes and sped down the long street after him. He did not see me, and I followed for nearly a mile till we came to a very low part of the city. Then he paused outside the door of a tavern—such a place



as no gentleman would be seen in. I stole closer and looked in through a window. Men were sitting about playing and drinking—nay, there were even some women too, to their shame be it said. Laughter and coarse jests issued through the half-open door. My lord walked in and straight up the room. I saw him go to one of the tables and lay his hand on the shoulder of a man, and I heard him say, "Come with me, Robin." Killearn rose to his feet. He looked the worse for drink, but made no protest. "How much does he owe you, gentlemen?" my lord asked. I could not hear their answer, but he thrust his hand into his pocket and laid some coins on the table. Then he walked out of the place, and Robin followed him. I stepped back into a narrow lane to let them go by, and went slowly home after them. In later days Robin told me that it was neither the first time nor the last that my lord had thus come after him.

Anon Colonel Hewitt came to tell me that I had been long enough with his patient. So I left, wondering at the Colonel, who was arranging the bedclothes as if he had been the lad's mother.

During the next week I spent a good deal of time with young Warden. We played chess, and read a volume of "Plutarch's Lives" together. But one afternoon, finding him at a game of cards with a certain Major Grey, a friend of Colonel Hewitt's, I betook myself for a long walk and reached the outskirts of the city. There were small houses on either side of the road, cheerful and new, each standing in its own garden, which was laid out in



stiff Dutch fashion. The flowers were so beautiful in one that I stood for a space leaning over a low stone wall to watch them, and as I did so I perceived an exceeding fair maiden sitting in a little arbour only a few yards from me, weeping bitterly. As I was wondering what might be the cause of her grief, she raised her head and saw me. I felt that I had intruded, and to make amends, offered my services if I could in any way assist her. At first she seemed startled and affrighted, but after some little converse confided to me that she was the daughter of an English officer, and beloved by an English Cavalier, Sir Rupert Fortescue by name, who for some unaccountable reason was much disliked by her father. She had been forbidden ever to see or speak to her lover again, and she had not set eyes on him for three weeks. If she could only send him a letter——

What did I say—young fool that I was—but that if she would trust me I would be a faithful messenger? Then she drew a little packet from her dress and delivered it to me, telling me where her lover lodged, and thanking me with tears in her eyes. She was about to tell me her own name and parentage, when we heard steps and voices not far off and she fled in haste.

I went on mine errand, but passing our inn on the way, and finding it was supper-time, I entered, thinking to get some food, and entertain Geoffrey with my adventure ere I concluded it. My kinsmen were all out, but I found Geoffrey lying on a couch downstairs for the first time. His cousin was with

him, and Major Grey too, and I thought they would make merry over my story and help me to devise a way for the lady to meet her knight. I little knew! Ere I had finished Major Grey sprang to his feet in a fury.

"Give me that letter, sir," quoth he. "The maid of whom you speak is my daughter, and as for Rupert Fortescue—a more unscrupulous villain never breathed—confound him! Where is the letter?"

I would not give it. I hardly know what I said, but in another moment our swords were out. Then Colonel Hewitt broke in.

"Bethink you, Glenternie," he said. "You have acted over-hastily. Take the packet back to Mistress Dorothy Grey, or at least promise her father that after delivering it you will do naught more to aid her meeting with her lover."

But I was roused and would hear none of him. I am afraid I even said that it was like him to interfere, or some such unmannerly speech. My sympathies were all with the poor maid and her lover, were he villain or not. Geoffrey prayed me not to fight, but I heeded him no whit, and as Major Grey was between me and the door, I called him to guard and attacked him. Gorthie and Claverhouse, who were just returning to the Brown Bear, ran in at the clash of arms, while Colonel Hewitt threw himself between us. While they were demanding the cause of our quarrel I slipped past the Colonel, and betook myself to Fortescue's lodgings.

I found him a most brilliant and handsome



gentleman. He received me with every courtesy, swore that he would not rest till Mistress Dorothy was his bride, and laughed heartily at Major Grey's anger and alarm. He pressed me to stay and sup with him, and I willingly did so. Two hours in his company passed swiftly, and when I retraced my steps to the Brown Bear I had promised to join him again on the following evening. I returned to find Archibald and Colonel Hewitt walking up and down the little garden of the inn, smoking and talking together. As I approached I heard Archibald say,

"Yes indeed, my uncle will be highly displeased with him—young fool!" Then he wheeled round and caught sight of me. "Where have you been, Nigel?" he asked sharply.

"I have yet to learn that I am answerable to you for where I go," I retorted. "But I have no objection to telling you. I have been supping with Sir Rupert Fortescue, and intend to do so again to-morrow."

"I forbid you to go," said Archibald sternly. "Fortescue is well known in the Hague. He is no fit companion for a gentleman. You had better leave for Breda to-morrow."

"You shall not treat me as if I were a bairn," I cried hotly. "I shall go to Breda when I choose. You have no right to command me"—and I turned my back on him and went off to bed. Something in my heart, however, was telling me that Rupert Fortescue was not the gallant gentleman he seemed on the surface; and that I should hardly care to

present him to my lord and say, "Here is a friend of mine."

I had not been long in my chamber that night ere there was a knock at the door, and Colonel Hewitt came in.

"Glenternie," he said, and his tone was very mild though I had certainly insulted him that afternoon, "may I have a few minutes' speech of you?"

"What do you want?" I demanded curtly.

"I want to ask you to take Lord Napier's counsel and go to Breda," quoth he, and then before I could reply he began to speak fast and earnestly. He told me that he had known Major Grey for years, and that he was a most affectionate and indulgent father, and that the fair Mistress Dorothy had only seen Fortescue a few times, but that her head had been turned by his attentions. Then the Colonel went on to say that he had heard of Sir Rupert for long as a man of loose and dissolute life, and in conclusion he urged me to take his advice as that of an older and more experienced man, saying that he only ventured to offer it because of the great respect and affection he bore to my lord. Whereat I grieve to say I taunted him with his churlishness to Montrose at Paris, and laughed his counsels to scorn.

The next day I kept aloof from my comrades until the evening, and then went to sup with my new friend. He had invited a few of his familiars as well as myself, and I was somewhat taken aback when he presented me to them as a *kinsman of* Captain Graham of Killearn. I was



made to tell the tale to the company, who all applauded my defiance of Major Grey till I felt myself to be the hero of the evening; yet I was ill at ease, for they were not the kind of men I had been used to consort with, and as the night drew on and the wine flowed freely, their jests grew coarse and foul, so that I blushed to hear them. As soon as I decently could, I rose to go, and when Sir Rupert pressed me to come again I explained that I must shortly go to Breda.

As I entered the courtyard of the Brown Bear, Rudolf was leading three horses across to the stables, and questioning him, I found that Montrose and Inchbraikie had just arrived from Breda. He thought my lord would fain see the Princess of Orange on business matters connected with our recruiting. I cared not why he had come—it was enough for me that he was there. I went in and found him supping with mine uncle, while Archibald and Colonel Hewitt and others sat by talking, so that a shake of the hand was all I could get with him, and when he went up to his chamber Inchbraikie was still with him.

The next morning, however, as I came down to breakfast, I heard him saying to Colonel Hewitt, "Yes, I must be at Breda again to-morrow. I shall leave this afternoon. Nigel," and he turned to me, "will you be ready at three? I cannot spare you any longer."

"Yes, sir," I answered, "most willingly. Who else goes with us?"



"No one," said my lord. "It will be like old times, will it not? We must conjure up misty mount and purple moor, and forget we are riding through these dismal Lowlands."

So at three we set forth, and as ill luck would have it, I beheld as we neared the gate of the city Sir Rupert Fortescue. A lady was hanging on his arm, and a friend was with him. If only we could pass him unperceived—but not so.

"Whither away so fast?" he called out, and crossed the road to speak with me.

"Breda," quoth I briefly; and then added, "I am in attendance on my lord. I cannot tarry."

"You will return ere long—doubtless," said he. "In the meantime convey my regards to Captain Graham of Killearn."

I bowed in acquiescence and spurred on my horse.

"Who is your friend, Nigel?" asked my lord, as I overtook him a moment later.

"An acquaintance, so please you, sir," I said. "Not a friend. His name is Rupert Fortescue."

"Ah!" said my lord—and no more.

That evening we drew rein at a small hamlet, and with difficulty procured a lodging for the night.

While our supper was being prepared, and Rudolf was attending to the horses, we strolled in the twilight through some pleasant meadows by the bank of a small stream, and I felt the moment had come to tell my lord all.

"*Sir,*" I said, as we went along, "I have much to



speak to you about. I fear you will be sore displeased with me."

"Say on, lad," quoth he, and forthwith I plunged into the matter.

At the beginning of my sorry tale we continued our walk, but when I came to my insolence to Colonel Hewitt I stopped, and so did he, and we stood facing one another in the sweet-scented meadow, and there seemed to me no sound in the still evening air save that of mine own voice. It may seem to you, my grandsons, that it was no great matter after all—a boy's indiscretion and discourtesy, naught more—but it was a very great matter to me. I had not lived with Montrose for naught, and I was gradually learning that to be a good man is the noblest thing a man can be.

My lord was no soft speaker nor mincer of words, and he set forth roundly what he thought of me, so that my cheeks burned.

"You will write an apology to Colonel Hewitt," he concluded, "and to Major Grey too. I am grieved beyond measure that this should have occurred just after I had spoken to you about your conduct."

"I—I am very sorry, my lord," I faltered. "But I really cannot apologize, sir—to them. Who are they that I should crave their pardon?—I am a Graham—and——"

"You are a young fool!" he said sharply, and I was silent.

Turning on his heel he walked back across the

field, speaking no word. Then ere we reached the village he stood still a space, as if considering me. At last he spake.

"I fear me, Nigel," he said sadly, "that I have kept that promise very ill that I made to your father ere he died. I see now that it might have been better had I let you take your place among my younger officers. I have of late years permitted you more freedom of intercourse with me than if you had been my own son—partly because you so often remind me of John, and partly because my heart has been strangely drawn to you ever since you came to me as a bairn with your big bunch of roses. But I fear I have not been wise, and I blame myself every whit as much as you for your pride and self-sufficiency."

Every word went through me like a knife. To think that my lord should ever have to use such words to me!

"Oh, my lord!" I cried, "I pray you speak not thus—I—I cannot bear it. Forgive me, sir—I will apologize. It is all my fault, sir—not yours. You have been more than a father to me—my dear lord! Believe me, sir, you shall never have to speak to me thus again," and I caught his hand in both mine and kissed it; and I think my lord saw I was truly sorry, for he said little more of reproof, and all that evening and the next day or so he, perceiving that I was sore grieved at his words, spake most gently and graciously to me—yea, even as an exceeding tender father. So I took comfort, for I knew he loved me no



less, nay, rather more, and for my part my heart yearned towards him, and I felt even as I had never done before—the joy and privilege of being with him.

CHAPTER XV.

FOR MY LORD'S SAKE.

WE only spent a night or two at Breda, and then travelled on to Brussels, where the King tarried about a week, on his way to St. Germains. It was early in July, and on a warm pleasant evening, one, or it may be two days after our arrival, I was walking in the town with Ralph when I saw down an alley a rough, uncouth stripling belabouring a boy half his size—a mere bairn of ten or eleven. I shouted to him to desist, and when he paid no attention I ran down the lane and gave him a lesson that I warrant sent him off sore and aching.

The following evening my lord sent me with a letter to some English Cavalier of note—the name hath escaped me now—dwelling at the other end of the town. I left the missive, but not till I had spent some time in finding the house, and started back through dark and narrow streets. When I had nearly reached our inn I perceived the little lad of yesterday, sitting on a doorstep munching a lump of black bread. I nodded to him as I went by,



and he smiled shyly and touched his ragged cap. A moment later a thick plaid was flung over my head, and a blow from behind stunned me.

When next I knew aught I was in a long, low room, where were gathered three or four gentlemen and two servants. I recognised Lauderdale and two of the Scots' Commissioners, and my heart sank within me. What they were doing at Brussels I could only conjecture as I was marched to the bottom of the table and told to sit down. Two curious little instruments lay before me.

"Thumbscrews, lad," observed the Earl with a malicious smile. "I would we had James Graham himself, but his aide-de-camp will serve our purpose very well. We have a few questions to ask which you will be pleased to answer."

One of the servants came forward and put the thumbscrews on my hands, while they all sat round, watching with interest. I was resolved that not a word should escape me, cost me what it might. Most of the questions were military ones relating to the coming campaign, and most of them I could answer. I felt sick and dizzy with pain as the fellow turned the thumbscrews remorselessly, and more than once my lips seemed almost framing—against my will—the words they wanted. Would my lord ever know what had chanced to me? Would Mistress Margaret ever know? Visions of old days long gone by and memories of home crowded on me, and the room began to swim before my gaze.

"Remove them, Colin," I heard the Earl say, "we must take stronger measures."

I was left in peace for some minutes while they all talked together in low tones.

"Stand up, my young friend," said Lauderdale, "we have not done with you yet."

I rose to my feet, and then saw to my horror that a man stood by the fireplace, holding a sword among the blazing logs. At a sign from the Earl he drew it out. It was red hot.

"Take off his doublet and shirt," ordered the Earl, and they did so.

One of the Covenanters present was a minister. He leant across the table with an evil leer.

"Now, young man," quoth he, "we have heard rumours that James Graham hath dared to lift his presumptuous eyes to Princess Louise. Is this so?"

I longed to declare it, and fling it in their faces triumphantly, but my word had been passed to my lord and my lips were sealed. My whole soul went up in one prayer for strength to be true, as the sword was laid about my back. Anon I could not control a cry of pain; the room grew dark; I heard steps and voices without, and then fell back unconscious.

* * * * *

Some time later I found myself lying on a couch in my lord's room at our inn. Montrose and Beverley were standing by the window. I tried to think but could not.

Then I heard my lord's voice.

"I will take care of him to-night, Ralph. Will



you go down and give the little lad this if he has finished his supper? He has done us good service." And the Marquis put some money into Beverley's hand.

I waited till the door was softly closed. Then I whispered feebly,

"My lord."

He came to my side, and smoothed back my hair, and sitting down took my right hand in his, and looked at my torn thumb.

"My poor boy," said he, "did the scoundrels get much from you?"

"Not one word, sir," I answered, and it was well worth all the pain to look him in the face and tell him that."

"I deemed it would be so," quoth he. "I am proud of you, Nigel."

The entrance of the leech at that moment stayed further converse He bandaged my thumbs, and put some healing ointment on my back, and wrapped me in a large soft cloth. Then my lord, being ever most hospitable, must needs take him down to supper, bidding me lie quiet and endeavour to sleep. But sleep was far from me, for it was misery to lie still and worse to move, and there followed for me a time of such torment and terror as I can scarce describe. There seemed to be mocking faces all around me—the faces of my torturers. Lauderdale's above all, and the minister's with its devilish cunning. I fancied I heard their mocking voices and their footsteps on the stairs, and when the door opened I cried out in terror. But lo! it was only Ralph with a cup

of broth for me. He made me drink it, and then asked me why I had called thus. There was neither pride nor courage left in me, so I told him, and besought him to bide with me till my lord came to bed. He might well have jibed at my foolishness, but instead was exceeding kind, and tarried with me till we heard Montrose's step without, when he bade me good night and went away. I think he must have told my lord at the door how it had been with me, for when the Marquis had re-arranged my pillows and given me somewhat to drink, he drew out a letter from his pocket, and sitting down beside me, said,

"Methinks, Nigel, you will be in no wise troubled by the spirits of the Covenanters so long as I am with you. Hearken to this."

And he read me part of a letter received at Breda from the Queen of Bohemia, saying that she had had his portrait (which Master Gerard Honthorst painted while we were at the Hague) hung in her private cabinet to frighten away those Covenanters who desired interviews with her. Thereat I could not but smile, and my lord, seeing me somewhat cheered, went on to tell me that he intended to spend a week at Rhenen early in August. Then the Covenanters vanished from before mine eyes.

"I shall be about again then, sir?" I asked.

"I trust so, indeed," said he, "but were you not recovered, I would have you carried thither in a litter. I would not deprive Mistress Margaret of your company for the world."

I blushed exceedingly, and my lord said, "Where-



fore did you not come to me before about this matter, my boy? Methinks I was right at Rhenen in the winter, was I not?"

"Yea—sir—" I faltered, "but in truth, my lord, I love you best," whereat my lord smiled unbelievingly and shook his head.

"But it is so, sir," I persisted. "Indeed I essayed not to care for her, but she is so sweet and lovely that I cannot help it."

"You foolish laddie," said he, "I am right glad it should be so. No one, I know, can ever come between you and me. But not a word more now. I have allowed you to talk too much already."

Seldom had I lain awake before in my life, and it seemed exceeding grievous to me—yet it might have been far worse, for my dear lord never left my side all the night long, nor with him seated there, so that whenever I would I might clasp his hand in both mine, did my horrible dread again overwhelm me. Despite some fever and a vast deal of discomfort the days that followed were far from unpleasant. All the time I lay me in my lord's chamber on a couch by the window. I could see the garden below, and the busy street beyond; the pigeons cooed on the roof just as they did at home, and the honeysuckle straggled over the sill with its sweet homely smell. All the gentlemen with my lord were exceeding kind to me, and would ever and anon come in and converse with me. I believe some of them had deemed my lord's favour and countenance somewhat ill bestowed upon such a careless young spark as I, but henceforth they thought so no more.

My never failing companion at this time was Ralph Beverley. We talked by the hour of my fair cousin, and I told him every single thing I could remember of Lilias.

The childish pranks of his lady-love had a singular charm for him. I liked to tell, and he to listen, so the hours flew quickly by. One afternoon when he had left me so that I might sleep, I was just about to fall into a doze when the door was opened by my lord, who stood back to admit none other than the young King himself.

"Nigel," quoth the Marquis, "His Majesty hath been so good as to come and see you."

I struggled to my feet and bowed, feeling abashed that any doings of mine should have been retailed to the royal ears.

"Lie down again, Mr. Graham," said the King, motioning me with his hand to return to the couch (which I was glad to do). "I have not come to disturb you, but only for a little converse."

My lord set a chair for him, and then, to my alarm, left me to entertain my royal visitor alone —yet there was that about the King that set a man at his ease, and in a brief space I found myself talking away freely, as one lad might with another.

Presently the King said, "I want to hear about your encounter with the Covenanters. Tell me of it."

So I told all—all except that they had asked about my lord and the Princess. Something kept me silent on that point. When I had done, he observed quietly enough,



"I see my Lord Montrose has good reason to be proud of his friends."

He never roused in me that passion to do and die for him that he did in many, yet there was something in his tone now, and in the smile that illumined his dark face, that brought the colour to my cheek and made me understand how Montrose could love him for his own sake as well as for his noble father's.

"Yet would I fain hear more," he continued. "You know, of course, that the Marquis is in love with Princess Louise. Did they say aught on that score?"

So I perforce had to speak.

"Yea, sir," I made answer. "They knew naught, yet suspected, and questioned me if it were so."

Then the King's brow grew very dark and he swore an oath beneath his breath.

"And you?" he queried sharply.

"I trow, sir," quoth I, "that I was good enough actor to look amazed at such a possibility—but I spake no word, and I was as one dumb the whole time."

A half-suppressed sigh of relief escaped the King—he laughed hastily to cover it—and rose as he did so; at that moment my lord entered, and he turned to him.

"I find, my lord," he said, "that you breed heroes north of the Forth."

"And traitors south, sire," added Montrose sadly.

"But we are going to teach them loyalty at the claymore's point, eh, my lord?" laughed the King,

casting as winning a smile as I have ever seen on Montrose.

"With God's help, I trust so," quoth my lord earnestly.

Then King Charles turned to me.

"Farewell, Mr. Graham," he said, holding out his hand for me to kiss. "We shall not be unmindful of your fidelity."

He told me not to rise, and putting his arm through my lord's, they went off. At the door they paused a minute. The King had said somewhat in a low tone to the Marquis, of which I caught only the last words—

"I would do more if I could."

I noted that my lord looked exceeding pleased, and he said,

"Pardon me, sire, but wherefore will your Majesty not do it?"

"No, no," said the King; "I leave it to you, Montrose. He will not value it the less, I'll be sworn."

Then, as they passed out, the King looked back over his shoulder and said,

"Remember me to the fair Mistress Margaret, Mr. Graham, when next you see her."

I blushed, and he and my lord departed laughing, leaving me to marvel what it might be of which they had spoken at the door.



CHAPTER XVI.

MY KINSWOMAN'S REAPPEARANCE.

WHEN the King quitted Brussels, my lord was anxious to return to the Hague as soon as might be, for there was much to be done before we embarked for Scotland in the autumn; so he left me at Brussels for another week with Ralph and Major Guthrie, and Gilbert Menzies, and when I was fit for the ride we set forth, travelling by easy stages, and spending two nights at Schiedam on the way, where good Cousin Margaret and Sir George vied with one another to pamper and spoil me. We reached the Hague in the latter part of July, and the day after our arrival my lord came to me, saying,

"Will you come out with me, Nigel, if you are fit for a walk?"

I was eager to do so, desiring to question him as to how soon we might be going to Rhenen; so in the pleasant cool of a summer evening we set forth. Geoffrey Warden went with us, and I was surprised to see how well and cheered he looked. He stepped out indeed with such alacrity, that twice my lord asked him to moderate his pace for my sake.

I soon perceived we were taking the same road that I had walked down when I came upon Mistress Dorothy Grey, and was not best pleased when my lord observed, "I want to see Major Grey," for of course I had not met him since our encounter, but had found at the Brown Bear a brief note from him, acknowledging my apology. I felt, too, that I should be embarrassed in meeting Mistress Dorothy, and much annoyed with young Warden for keeping so close to us (he might well have fallen behind, considering that I had not seen my lord for a fortnight). I whispered to Montrose,

"I need not say aught about—about——?"

"Oh, no, certainly not," he answered unhesitatingly; and somewhat relieved I held the gate opened for him, beholding as I did so Mistress Dorothy, gathering flowers in the garden, while her father sat by on a rustic bench with a book open on his knee. There was a table on the grass laden with dishes of fruit, and plates and glasses for six.

As we approached, Major Grey rose, his daughter laid aside her basket, and from the house came forth a stout elderly dame. I remembered that Mistress Dorothy had told me that a kinswoman of her mother's was about to arrive from England to take charge of her, and how she was dreading it. I glanced up therefore to see if this lady were of very terrible aspect, and on a sudden I seemed to stand again a little lad in the garden at home, with mine aunt lecturing me on my torn and muddy clothes.

"I believe, young sir," said Major Grey, "I need



hardly present you to my cousin, Mistress Powell," and my good aunt—for it was indeed she—surveyed me as she was wont in old days, observing,

"Well, nephew, methinks you look hardly the better for having passed out of my keeping!"

Then I remembered that long ago at home she had talked to me of a cousin of hers, one Dorothy Powell, who had married a Mr. Grey, and died at the birth of her little daughter, only a year after her marriage. Meanwhile mine aunt bade my lord welcome very heartily, and made us all sit down and take some refreshment, beckoning me to sit beside her.

She inquired for the man-servant and maid-servants at Glenternie, and nearly wept when I told her that the house had been plundered and partly burnt by the Covenanters.

"I trust the rogues did not remove the silver and napery?" she asked anxiously.

The villagers, who had suffered considerably at the enemy's hands, were as nothing in comparison.

Presently Major Grey and my lord went into the house, and Geoffrey, who seemed wonderfully at home, walked up and down the garden with Mistress Dorothy. Mine eye wandered in their direction, and seeing it, mine aunt said plaintively,

"Yes, indeed, I was sore vexed with Colonel Hewitt for bringing his young kinsman here so often. I consider that Dorothy would make a suitable wife for you, but since you have set your eyes elsewhere, as the Marquis informs me, I suppose I must be content with Mr. Warden, and I confess he

is a very proper youth, and far neater in his person than ever you were, nephew."

She perceived, as she spake, a rent in one of my ruffles, and hastening to fetch her needle and thread, mended it forthwith, questioning me closely all the time concerning the housewifely attainments of Mistress Margaret Craven. I could tell her naught of them, which agitated the good lady considerably, and she pointed out to me at great length the rashness of wooing a maiden who, peradventure—having lived at court—could make no choice dishes, and might be unskilled in the making and mending of garments. I comforted her a little by telling her that the Princess and her ladies were making my lord's standards for the war, which argued knowledge of fine needlework at least, and then did my best to turn her thoughts to other subjects. When I perceived my lord returning from the house and I rose to go, she prayed me as I loved her, to bring her all my clothes that needed attention, for nothing would give her more pleasure than to put them in repair.

Dear Aunt Catherine! She had never changed a whit in the one-and-twenty years I had known her, and she was in truth—as my lord observed while we were returning to the Brown Bear—"a most worthy and excellent dame, albeit cumbered about much serving."



CHAPTER XVII.

RHENEN.

RALPH BEVERLEY and I set forth for Rhenen two days before my lord, so that I might ride at a leisurely pace, for I was not yet myself again. On the second evening we tarried at a hostelry fifteen miles from Rhenen, where we had agreed to wait for our friends.

As we were about to begin our supper, I saw two horsemen draw rein in the courtyard without, and someone said in English:

"We will bide here for the night. We have ridden far to-day."

Ralph and I looked at one another, and said:

"Hugh Craven!"

On my first visit to Rhenen I had taken little notice of the lad, for in truth he had not attracted me at all; but one evening at the Hague Mistress Margaret had told me much about him, and prayed me to befriend him. Thenceforth I had endeavoured to do so, but 'twas no easy matter, for he seemed to shrink away if one spoke to him. Yet by degrees I gained his confidence and grew fond of him, for there was nothing untoward in his disposition, only



he was too gentle and clinging, and seemed to live in mortal dread of a sharp word or contemptuous look. He had confided to me that it was the dream of his life to go with us to Scotland, and his uncle would allow him to join us if Montrose would accept so feeble a volunteer.

Ralph and I warmly bade him welcome at the hostelry, insisting on his supping with us, and thirsting as we both were for Rhenen news, we did our uttermost to get him to talk. It would have been easy enough had I been alone, but he hardly knew Ralph at all, and a shy "Yea" or "Nay" were all we could draw from him. He plucked up courage in the end to tell us that he had been staying with a kinswoman at Antwerp, and then prayed us to excuse him as he was very weary.

"If he would eat more," I remarked, making a third attack on the pie before me, "he would be more hearty."

"Poor little lad!" said Ralph softly. "How old is he?"

"Nineteen, or thereabouts," I said, "but who would think it? And he desireth to come to the Highlands with us!" and I laughed aloud.

"He might do worse, though," observed Ralph. "There would be you to take care of him, and I for my part would sooner die of the hardships of a campaign than dangle at Court all my life. I should think it possible my lord might take him, especially as—well—he would have an interest in *him* as your future br——"



"I do wish you would not take the whole matter as settled," I interrupted. "How know you that Mistress Margaret will ever listen to my suit?"

"I do not know at all," said Ralph. "I never see these things, but I know my lord regardeth the whole matter as certain."

"I suppose even my lord may be mistaken," I said gruffly, and the subject dropped.

I was awake with the sun the next morning, and with difficulty Ralph prevailed on me to lie abed till five. As I stood by the window donning my doublet a faint sound of horses' hoofs struck my ear, and soon my lord rode up with Inchbraikie, Archibald, Harry Graham, Robin, and Rudolf. They had been riding two hours already that morning and had not broken their fast, so that they rested awhile at the hostelry and refreshed themselves and their horses. Later we all set forth—young Craven riding at my lord's side by an arrangement of mine, and trying to summon up courage to ask if he might join our expedition. The road seemed interminable, but at last we saw the château through the trees, the gates were opened for us by a smiling Dutchwoman, and we trotted briskly up the drive. As we dismounted at the door, Lord Craven and another of the Queen's gentlemen came out. They said that the Queen had gone for a ride, but that the Princess was on the archery ground, and thither led the way. As we approached the ladies I became unpleasantly conscious that every eye was fastened on me, and Lilias, escaping from Archibald's embrace, threw her

arms round my neck, and kissed me as if I had been her brother.

"Oh, Nigel!" she cried, "we are so proud of you! Mine uncle writ to the Princess of it—but we want to hear all about it from beginning to end—do we not, Margaret?" (And she turned to her friend.) "You poor boy!" she continued, "you are looking wretched, not pale exactly" (that I certainly was not, and her eyes danced mischievously as she said it), "but positively ill."

"He is tired, Lady Lilias, after the ride," put in Beverley from behind me.

"Doubtless he must be," she returned. "Take him back to the house, Captain Beverley, and see that he has some food. We shall be under these trees when you return, for we have done shooting."

"Nigel!" called my lord at this juncture. "Here, a minute!"

I turned and perceived my lord and the Princess about to leave the archery ground. She beckoned to me, and when I came forward she observed:

"I have been hearing much about you, Glenternie—in truth your gallantry hath been our chief topic of converse lately—hath it not?" she added laughingly, turning to several of her ladies who stood near. "And I assure you such a tale of valour doth not often enliven us in these quiet parts."

"I hope in a few months' time, madam," I said, "that many tales of nobler valour will reach Rhenen—but in truth I did naught."

"That will I not believe, Glenternie," quoth she,



"for I have full confidence in your General's testimony. One day you must tell me of the whole matter."

She gave me her hand to kiss, and then went off with my lord, while Ralph marched me to the house, and insisted on my taking a glass of wine and some bread. Then we adjourned to the garden. Lilias had ordered a couch to be carried thither for me, and truth to tell I was glad of it. There we sat for the rest of the morning, Lilias at my side, and Mistress Margaret where I could see her face divinely. There were other maids of honour also, and the Queen's Mistress of the Robes—who was an elderly kinswoman of Margaret's—to keep us in order.

I may say that to relate my adventure was the last thing I cared to do in public, but I yielded to their entreaties so far that I said Ralph might tell them if he cared. Except myself he knew more about that time than anyone did. I thought it might help him out of his shyness with Lilias, and in truth it was better than I could have hoped, for he warmed to his tale and his listeners fairly hung on every word—even Lilias hearkened approvingly—and I believed—I was not sure—but I believed, that when Mistress Margaret raised her eyes for a moment from her embroidery frame there were tears in them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SANS PEUR ET SANS REPROCHE.

I SHALL always maintain to my dying day that it was my sharp wit which brought Lilias to her senses about Ralph Beverley, and in this manner it came to pass. The day after we arrived at Rhenen I made up my mind to seek out my Lord Craven, and ask his permission to woo Mistress Margaret, but it was easier said than done, for he was ever in attendance on the Queen.

I was returning to the house in search of him that afternoon, after walking round the garden with young Craven, when I came upon Mistress Margaret sitting alone with her needlework in a pleasant little arbour, and at that moment Lilias went by with Robin, and I heard him say in a rueful tone,

"In truth, I am quite out in the cold in these days. It is naught but 'Nigel' morning, noon, and night. I would I had been nabbed by the Covenanters—'twas well worth the business——"

"Was it?" asked Mistress Margaret, looking up at me with a smile, as I ventured to take a seat in the arbour.

"I hardly think it was," I answered. "It is



wretched to feel like this, and I do not overmuch care for everyone making such an ado about me. I do not wish to be ungracious, but, you see, it maketh a man feel a fool. Ralph!"—I called out with a sudden thought, as I saw Beverley some little way off—"I think Montrose wants you in the archery ground. Excuse me, Mistress Margaret," I continued, "but, truth to tell, Robin is not in the best of moods to-day, and I have a notion that if Ralph goes after them he may possibly arrive at a fitting moment."

Mistress Margaret laid down her work and looked at me earnestly.

"Do you remember, Mr. Graham, one evening at the Hague, you told me Lilias would listen to Captain Beverley if he would persist."

"I recollect perfectly," I said, "and you declared that it was not so, and that a woman knew a woman's mind better than any man. But I am still of my opinion."

"I was about to confess to you," she returned, "that in this case you were right——"

And even as she spake we heard steps approaching, and Lilias herself came hurriedly towards us. She was very pale, with a frightened look in her eyes that I had never seen there before. We both rose hastily, asking her what was amiss.

"Oh, Nigel!" she cried. "Prithee seek mine uncle—at once! Robin hath been so rude! He tried to kiss me." Her cheeks flamed, and the grey eyes flashed. "And—then Captain Beverley came—and they are fighting—and——"



I needed no more, but set off running towards the house. As luck would have it, I met my lord alone on the way. A few moments later we were in the shrubbery, and my lord ordered them to sheath their swords instantly. He was obeyed, though I could see it was all they could do to bring themselves to it.

"Killearn," he said, and seldom have I heard his voice so stern, "you will be ready to start for Hamburg in half an hour. Come to my chamber before you go."

The tone was such that Robin simply bowed in acquiescence and left us. Then my lord walked back to the arbour with Ralph, and urged him to seize so fitting an opportunity to press his suit. I think Lilias had more self-control than any woman I ever met. She was talking away to Margaret when we arrived, as unconcerned as you please.

"Lilias," said my lord a little gravely, for he had chid her more than once about her familiarity with Robin, "I have brought you back your knight." And forthwith he turned from them both, and asked Mistress Margaret if she would give him her company till the Princess came out—sending me off to lie down, at which I was considerably aggrieved.

Nevertheless, I found my couch very welcome, and spent an hour in musing on Mistress Margaret and Ralph and Lilias, and the forthcoming campaign. I must win my spurs—that was clear, and return to my fair lady knighted on some stricken field. "Sir Nigel Graham," sounded very well I thought; and from these dreams I dropped into a peaceful slumber,



from which I was roused some time later by Rudolf knocking at the door and telling me that Montrose desired me to come to his chamber. Thither I went at once, and found him seated by the window, which looked towards the west. The sun was getting low, and the sky was one blaze of glory. I thought how often we had stood on the terrace at Kincardine, and watched him set over the hills.

"Oh, sir," I cried, as I joined my lord at the window. "Next August we shall be at home—in Scotland anyhow—and perchance the war will be over, and—and——"

"And we shall all be wed, I suppose," laughed my lord, which was just what I had been thinking.

"You wanted me, sir," I said.

"Yea, lad," he made answer. "I wanted a few minutes' converse with you before supper."

I sat me at his feet, which of late I had thought myself too old to do, and indeed, he observed somewhat to that effect. Then my lord began, and went plainly to the point at once, as was his wont.

"Nigel," quoth he, "the King hath desired me to confer on you the honour of knighthood for your gallantry at Breda."

I was fairly amazed.

"Oh, sir," I faltered. "I—I have merited it not. I—I am not worthy."

"I think perchance the King and I are the better judges of that," observed my lord. "You can refuse it if you so wish, but do not decide hastily. You know how much we have often regretted together that in these degenerate days knighthood is too

often the badge of wealth and position, not of honour and valour; but I am sure you will not be one to take it lightly upon yourself. To my thinking it is still the highest gift a sovereign can bestow. The old days of chivalry may be gone, and Don Quixote may be held up to ridicule, but I believe, Nigel, that it will help you above all things if you look on it in the highest way—and let it be a dedication of yourself to God, the King, and your lady, and to the service of the weak and the oppressed."

For a space we were silent. Then at last I said, "Sir, I would fain leave the matter in your hands. The King knoweth me not, but you know me—better even than I know myself. If you think it would be lightly and ill bestowed I will wait, but if you think I have won my spurs, then—then——" and I glanced up anxiously.

"I agree with the King, Nigel," said he.

"Then, my lord," I answered, "it shall be as the King desires."

Ere we could say more the great bell clanged for supper. I rose to my feet with a thousand things in my heart and no word wherewith to say them. "My dear lord," was all I could bring forth, "you shall not be disappointed in me."

"Sans peur et sans reproche, lad," he said. "Naught less."

I followed him down to the dining-hall as one in a dream, and took my usual place at Lilias' side. A moment later I was gently taken by the shoulders and moved to a lower seat.



"If you do not object," said Ralph, "I think I will sit here to-night."

I asked his pardon for my stupidity, and collecting myself offered him my congratulations, and begged him to tell me all anon. I thought the meal would never be over, and as soon as it was I escaped to my chamber and stayed there all the evening. Not even the thought of Margaret lured me down. I remembered how John and I had often planned our future together, and there had been but one culmination to our dreams—knighthood. My mind had been fed with books of romance ever since I could read, and I was full of what men in these days would call foolish and high-flown notions of chivalry. It seemed to me too great a wonder to be true. What was I—Nigel Graham—that I should receive such an honour? Of one thing I was resolved, and that was that I would prove worthy of it in the future; and all the evening my dear lord's words rang in my ears, yea, and haunted my dreams that night, "A dedication of yourself to God, the King, and your lady, and to the service of the weak and the oppressed."

* * * * *

When I awoke the next morning I saw Beverley (who shared my room), already dressed. He came to the bedside as I opened my eyes and surveyed me critically.

"Whatever was amiss with you last night, Nigel?" he asked. "You looked perfectly moon-



struck at supper, and where did you disappear to after?"

"I will tell you my news presently," I made answer. "I want to hear yours first. I could not keep awake till you came up last night. You were late."

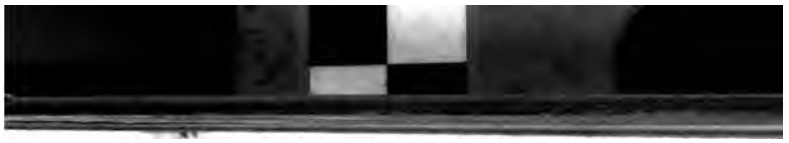
"Well, I was somewhat," admitted Ralph. "So will you be soon."

I could not get very much out of him, but it appeared that when the matter was still far from settled who should blunder upon them but Uncle Patrick, who from the very first had been violently opposed to Beverley, because he had no title, and, worse still, was an Englishman. Inchbraikie, it seems, had ordered Ralph off in high dudgeon—calling him "low-born," and I know not what else, at which Lilias was justly wroth, and told mine uncle roundly that she loved Captain Beverley, and would not have him thus insulted. At this juncture (what would I not have given to be there?) up came my lord and marched off the Laird, and then I presume after her declaration Lilias had to capitulate.

Ralph was all agog to know what my news might be, and I told him reluctantly, and begged him to pass it on to no one but Lilias. Dear old Ralph! He seemed to understand at once how I felt about the business—and he was so delighted that I was glad I had confided in him.

* * * * *

As soon as I had broken my fast that morning I went *boldly* to my Lord Craven's chamber. Fortunately



for me my way had been paved by the Queen and Montrose, or it would have gone hardly with me. As it was the old nobleman made it clear to me, so far as courtesy would permit him—I thought at the time a little farther—that he had hoped his niece would do better than marry a penniless exile with naught but his pedigree to boast of. As, however, the Queen had spoken with him on the subject and seemed very desirous of the match, he was ready to give his consent. So with a light heart I sought Mistress Margaret, and in the garden at Rhenen, children—which lives in an old man's memory as one of the sweetest places in the world—your grandmother promised to wed me when I came back from the war.

I seemed to have in those sunny days at Rhenen all that a man could desire, and even the thought of the future possessed for me no possibilities of evil. We must win the war—we could not fail in so righteous a cause—and then the return to those we loved when our work was done! Could it be that mortal men should have such joy this side heaven? I knew not that even then the shadow of a great sorrow was stealing fast upon me, and that my dear lord and I were daily coming nearer the parting of the ways.

Ere I left I was knighted by my lord in the presence of the Queen and the Princess and all the household, with Margaret to buckle on my sword and spurs. I know not how it was, but after that time a change passed over the intercourse between my lord and me. Thenceforth I felt myself no



longer the indulged page or favoured aide-de-camp, but something nearer to him. Whether it were that I too was a lover, or that I was deeply sensible of my new responsibility I know not, but certain it is that my lord from that time honoured me with a frank brotherly friendship, and as for me I prized it above all things in the world.

The Marquis returned to the Hague at the end of the week, but left me at Rhenen to fully recover my health, until almost the end of the month, when he came again for a flying visit with all his company, and then started for Amsterdam and Hamburg. So early one morning our last farewells were said—the last indeed for some of us—and we turned our horses' heads northwards, with an ache at our hearts. I speak for myself at least. We rode for an hour with hardly a word passing between us, till my lord turned in his saddle and said,

"Nigel, that verse of Lovelace's; it hath escaped me. 'Yet this inconstancy—inconstancy——'"

> "Yet this inconstancy is such," I said,
> "As thou, too, shalt adore;
> I could not love thee, dear, so much,
> Loved I not honour more."

My lord nodded. Poor Geoffrey groaned aloud, whereat we all fell a-laughing at his melancholy countenance, till he perforce joined in our mirth, and plucking up our spirits we set ourselves to talk, and if it might be, think only of the coming campaign.



CHAPTER XIX.

THE FORLORN HOPE.

MY Lord Kinnoul left Hamburg for the Orkney Islands in September, and we followed five months later, after many untoward delays, for we were crippled by a desperate lack of money and an ice-blocked harbour. Disaster dogged us from the first. Our ships were wrecked, men and arms perished; we landed to find Kinnoul dying of a fever, and though his brother who succeeded to the title was a loyal friend to my lord, it was not the same. But far worse than these mischances were the tidings that the King had reopened negociations with the Covenanters. Could we expect Scottish Cavaliers to rise after all they had suffered in the past war, when Argyll was offering to restore the King peaceably without bloodshed? Yet the royal commands bade us "proceed vigorously and effectually." The good Queen at Rhenen had foreseen our ruin surely, when she wrote to my lord, "I pray God keep the King in his constancy to you and to his other true friends."

Near Invercarron in Sutherlandshire one wet April

day, we were attacked and surrounded by mine old acquaintance, Colonel Strachan, in command of the advance troops of Leslie's army. It was not defeat; it was annihilation. I kept close to my lord's side to ward off the blows meant for him, and we fought as men fight their last fight. Then I was stricken on the head by the butt of a trooper's carbine—I staggered in the heather slippery with blood, and fell.

* * * * *

When I opened mine eyes again I was lying on my back with the stars shining above me, and a pain in my head that made me feel sick and dizzy. I sat up and looked round. At first all was silent with a deadly silence that brought a sense of fear as I gazed on the dark figures that seemed verily to cover the ground as far as I could see. Then I heard here and there a faint moan, and I observed on the hill the camp fires of the enemy. I peered at the man who lay nearest to me, and in the darkness I dimly discerned his yellow curls matted with blood. "Ralph!" I whispered, "Ralph!" but there was no reply. He only gazed up at the starry sky with wide blue eyes. I found his hand, it was icy cold. Then a horrible dread took hold of me, for close to him lay two men, the one on the other, and as I crept towards them my knees shook, and my heart beat so fast that I was hardly able to breathe. I bent over them and gave a gasp of relief—ay relief—though one was Hugh and the other was Menzies, still grasping in a lifeless hand the staff from which



the standard had been torn away. I resolved that before dawn I would know the worst, or be able to hope for the best. Through the heaps of slain I crawled all that long night, not daring to stand in case I should be seen by the sentries on the hill. By one grey crag, which the men of Corbiesdale unto this day call the Rock of Lamentation, the ground was thick with heaps of slain, but never one did I pass over, either dying or dead. Into each face I peered through the darkness; then I thanked God that the dead face was not my lord's, and crept along to the next. Yet a week later I would have given all I possessed to have found my dear lord cold and stiff on the hill at Invercarron.

In four or five hours my search was done, and I knew that Montrose was—in all probability—still alive, either a prisoner or—dared I hope it?—still free. I resolved at once to go in search of him, yet ere I did so I crept once more to Beverley's side, and drawing my dirk, cut off a thick yellow curl. Then I bethought me he had been writing to Lilias that evening. I thrust my hand into his pocket and brought forth some paper and a little book. It was the letter—unfinished, yet how precious it would be to her. The little volume was an English prayer book, sorely stained, but methought it would be all the more dear to her. So I took that also with me, and crept away down to the Kyle. I swam across the stream, and hurried along I knew not whither till I had put three or four miles between me and the field of battle. Then the first faint streaks of dawn warned me to be careful, and seeing some figures in the

distance, I crept into a little copse and found there a gravel-pit well covered with bushes, in which I hid myself. I wondered dimly as I lay there why it was that I seemed to be grieving so little for Ralph and Hugh, and for many another gallant gentleman whom I had seen lying dead that night. It was in truth that my whole being was consumed with anxiety about my lord, and beside my fear for him all other trouble was as naught.

I stayed in the pit all day, hearing distant steps and voices more than once. I slept for a good many hours, and then as evening fell, I went on my way with what speed I could, for I was becoming faint with hunger, and the pain in my head was considerable. Ere long I perceived a light twinkling ahead of me, and found on reaching it a small cottage. An old woman was sitting within, and I prayed her in Gaelic for some food. She looked at me suspiciously at first, and when I frankly told her the truth she seemed about to shut the door on me. Then she relented, and placed before me bread and meat. As I ate, there was a stir in the corner, and a man who was lying there sat up and yawned. He had an old sack thrown over him, and I had not observed him. I started up in some alarm, but to my astonishment he began to speak in English. It was too dark for me to see his face, but he could see mine as I sat by the little rush-light.

"As I live 'tis Nigel," he remarked, yawning again. "What are you doing here? And where am I? Oh yes, I remember. By Heaven, that whiskey was *excellent,* but I took a trifle more than I should



have. Night already, and we are six or seven miles from Corbiesdale. My lord will be wrathful."

"Robin!" I cried, "what mean you? Why are you talking thus? Were you not in the battle? Know you not——"

"Battle?" he exclaimed excitedly. "When? Where? Tell me. How long have I been here?" He pressed both hands against his forehead. He had a stupid, dazed look on his face. In a second it all came to me—and I hated him. I rose and faced him.

"Montrose sent you scouting yesterday morning?" I asked.

"Yes; but——"

"And you came in here and drank," I went on.

"But, Nigel," he cried despairingly, "it could not have been yesterday—it was this morning——"

"No," I said, "it was yesterday. He sent you scouting to the south—yesterday—and yesterday Colonel Strachan stole on us unawares *from the south.*" Robin's eyes fell from mine. He quailed before me, but I went on remorselessly: "He attacked us suddenly—we were overpowered, and utterly annihilated. Ralph Beverley is killed, so is Menzies, so is Craven; so are many others. All the rest may be prisoners for aught I know. The cause is lost—lost because you were drunk—!"

"My lord?" he murmured in a hoarse trembling voice.

"A prisoner belike," I answered fiercely. Robin

turned away and dropped on his knees beside the table and buried his face in his arms.

I turned to the old woman who had been gaping upon me, thanked her briefly, bought half a loaf from her—she refused to take any money for what I had eaten there—and I went my way. I perceived that the cottage in which I had been was the first of a small hamlet. I avoided the rest of the houses, and wandered on and on all the night long, knowing not whither I went. It was very dark with thick clouds overhead. I could hear by the sound of water on my right that I was not far from a stream, and then on a sudden I tripped and fell headlong. I had been nearly falling asleep as I walked, but now I was thoroughly awake, and I at once perceived that the thing over which I had fallen was not—as I had at first supposed—a log, but the body of a man. I turned back and bent over him, sick with anxiety. I could in no wise discern his face, but it was cold and so were his hands—yet not very cold—and his heart was not beating. I tried my palm on his palm. It was the hand of a big man, and the fingers were longer than mine. Then my heart gave a bound of joy. It was not my lord. I doubted not it was some fugitive from Invercarron, and being very weary I lay down near by and slept.

When I awoke it was daylight, but as a thick wet mist hung over the moor, I could not see above twenty yards away. I went to the dead man's side. It was the Earl of Kinnoul, and I hoped that *Montrose* had been with him till he died, and that

I was on the right track. I ate half my bread and drank some of the water from the stream, and on I went. But I shall weary you, my children, with all this tale of wanderings; and even as I write the strangeness, the horror and the suspense of it cometh over me again. Let me pass on to the end of my quest.

It must have been five or six days—but I am not sure—after this that I came upon a little loch embosomed in the hills, and saw before me at a turn of the path an old man standing on the margin. In his left hand he held a harp. It was a wild, windy night; the tall firs beside me bent their heads, swaying and moaning; the water curled itself into white frothy waves and sobbed as it splashed at his feet. He was speaking wildly to himself in the Gaelic, and the words seemed to burn themselves into my brain.

"The great Chief passes by—he passes alone—he passes to death. Where are they whom he led to great spoil, who loved his voice in the battle, who dyed their dirks in the blood of the Campbells? Gone like dew on the mountain, broken like spray on the headland. The waters close over them, the green grass will wave on them, but not on him—not on him!"

I stood still well nigh paralyzed for a moment; then I went to him.

"My Chief? Have you seen him? Where is he?" I asked.

He pointed with a long arm at a house on the mountain-side, and I ran with all speed and climbed



the steep slope with renewed strength in my limbs. Yet even as I did so the words rang in mine ears as if borne upwards from the loch on the voice of the wind.

"The great Chief passes by—he passes alone—he passes to death."

And I cried aloud,

"Oh God, not alone! If he must needs die take me too!"

Then having gained the level ground I ran to the house and would have entered; but a man stood in the doorway with a claymore in his hand.

"My Chief is here," I explained, "let me go to him."

The fellow stood back with an evil smile.

"He is in the room overhead," he said, and I went up a narrow stone stair, and heard through a door on my right the voice I had sought through these days of despair and misery. I lifted the latch and entered. At the table sat my dear lord. There was food before him, but he rested his head on his hand in much weariness of body and spirit, and was eating naught. As for me, I went to him like a child to its mother, and kneeling at his side sobbed out all my sorrow about him, and much other foolishness, for I was weak with hunger and worn out, and knew not what I said.

"Nigel, dear lad," quoth he, "I deemed you had been slain. I saw you go down by my side in the last struggle round the standard, with Ralph and Gilbert."

"They were killed, and Hugh too," I explained; "but I was only stunned, I have sought you day and night since. I feared—oh, my lord" (for his face contracted for a moment as if with intense pain), "you are hurt—have you been wounded?"

"It is naught, Nigel," he returned, and tried to smile. "See, you have not spoken to Colonel Hewitt."

I had scarce observed the Colonel's presence, and made hasty amends.

"Now, Nigel," said my lord, "sit down and take your fill—no, not a word more till you are satisfied—we will consider the situation then."

"But, my lord," I cried, "you will eat too?"

My lord shook his head, but Colonel Hewitt went round the table and laid his hand on Montrose's shoulder even as Uncle Patrick might have done.

"My dear lord," he said resolutely, "eat you must. You know not what is before you, and you have no strength to face it."

Then Montrose gave way and ate somewhat, and we all kept silence till we had made an end. At last the Colonel pushed back his plate, and rising went to the window in the goodness of his heart, so that I might be left alone with my lord.

"Nigel," he said in a low quiet tone, "we came here three days ago because we—I at least—could go no further, and these MacLeod's are for Argyll. I have my back to the wall at last. I have prayed them to take our lives, but they will not. They have sent for Leslie. He will be here at sunset."



For a moment I hardly grasped the whole purport of his words. Then I cried,

"Oh, my lord, not that—anything but that! Think what it will mean, sir—to be carried to Edinburgh as prisoners, insulted, tormented by the ministers. Oh, sir, I cannot bear it — I cannot! There is an easier way," and young coward that I was I plucked out my dirk and laid it on the table.

"God forbid, Nigel!" quoth he. "Are we Christians for naught? Can we face neither suffering nor scorn? Would we rather go before our Maker with our own blood on our hands? Let us put such a temptation out of the way at once," and taking up the dirk he stepped to the window and threw it out.

"You, too, sir?" I asked.

"Surely," he made answer, "is it any easier, think you, for me to face it?"

I knew well enough it was a thousand times harder, and yet he faltered not.

"But, Nigel," he went on after a moment's pause, "I desire, if possible, that you shall escape, for you are young yet, and the King needeth every leal sword, and Mistress Margaret——"

"My lord, my dear lord," I cried, "not so! I will not leave you. God do so to me and more also if I forsake you in your hour of need. I have been a craven hound, but you shall see I will die as befits a follower of the Great Marquis. But leave you? No!"

Then he reasoned with me. At first I would not hearken. But when he pointed out that if I were free



I might plan his escape, whereas I could in no wise aid him as a prisoner, I began to see his counsel was just and right, and sadly enough I yielded. The sun was very low in the sky when we heard a distant bugle blast.

"We have ten minutes yet, by that sound," said my lord. "See, Nigel, ere they come I would fain give you this. I desire that the Covenanters should not see it—they might take it from me."

He unclasped the locket which hung round his neck, opened it for a minute and smiled a little at the bright young face within. And for the first time in my life I rejoiced that John was dead. I took the locket from him, and promised him that it should be my most precious possession. Then my lord said he would fain be alone a few minutes, and I joined Colonel Hewitt at the window. He gave me a letter for Geoffrey, in case he should have made good his escape, and then told me, speaking in low reverent tones, so that I hardly knew the sneering Colonel of old time, of all that had passed since he and Montrose, and my Lord Kinnoul, cut through Strachan's troopers, and swimming across the Kyle escaped their foes for the moment. He told me, too, how bravely my dear lord, weak and wounded though he was, had borne himself throughout.

"Oh, sir," I burst out, "wherefore is it that God letteth such things be?"

The Colonel shook his head sadly.

"We cannot know—here," he said.

Then Montrose joined us and we stood for a space by the window. There was a fierce angry

sunset—I can see it now—and another bugle blast sounded very close.

"Nigel," quoth my lord, "we had best make our farewells at once."

I could not speak, but I knelt at his feet, and he laid his hand on my head and prayed God to bless me. Then he turned to Colonel Hewitt, and it did not seem strange at the time, though I have often wondered at it since, that the Englishman should have bared his head and raised my lord's hand to his lips.

Soon the trampling of horses which we had long heard came nearer and nearer, and in another minute they appeared, the light of the setting sun glittering on their steel helmets. They raised a shout of triumph as they saw my lord at the window, as hunters who see the stag at bay at last. Anon we heard voices and steps below. I drew back in the shadow of the wall to a corner by the window, which we had arranged I should do. My lord stepped forward, with Colonel Hewitt behind him. His ragged coat and kilt, blood-stained and soiled, the pain of his wounds, the exhaustion of body and exceeding trouble of mind seemed unable to detract from the nobility of his bearing, and when the Covenanters burst in upon us they stood for a space silent before him. Leslie himself was not there, but with the main body of the troops at Ardvrech Castle some miles away, and General Holborn was in command with MacLeod of Assynt, who had betrayed us, at his side. The General briefly arrested Montrose and ordered a couple of soldiers to bind his hands, but as they



advanced the Marquis stopped them with a quick gesture.

"I give my parole," he said.

"Na parole frae ane accursed traitor," quoth Holborn fiercely.

My blood boiled, and I saw Hewitt start forward with a clenched fist, and then a glance from my lord staid him. Montrose looked at the fellow.

"Have I ever refused parole or ever broken my faith with a prisoner," he asked quietly, "that I should be so dealt with?"

Holborn uttered an oath. He had been at Philiphaugh and the home-thrust was keen.

"Bind him!" he almost shouted, and the two troopers stepped forward to do his bidding. I felt mad with impotent rage as my dear lord's hands were crossed behind his back and tightly bound. Then Assynt called for a torch, and I knew my time had come. I stepped on to the window-ledge, jumped the twelve feet to the ground, snatched up my dirk which the Marquis had thrown out, caught the bridle of a horse, and leaping into the saddle rode off for dear life. It was all the work of a moment, and the very confusion and excitement that followed saved me. There were shouts and wild shots, and mounting of steeds in pursuit; but I had chosen my horse well, and he went like the wind. In three quarters of an hour I had distanced all pursuers and felt safe. I judged myself to be riding as I desired, due south. Fifteen miles more should bring me to the country of my mother's kin, the MacDonalds of Glengarry. Surely the men who

had followed my lord down the slopes of Inverlochy would be up to save him now.

It could not have been far from midnight when I observed two figures a short way ahead of me. I resolved to call out and ask them the way, for though the country seemed to be getting more and more familiar to me, I was not sure where I was, owing to the darkness of the night. I hailed them, and they started, turned, and hastened towards me.

"Glenternie!" they both cried, and to my joy I saw before me Uncle Patrick and young Glengarry himself. In one breath they both asked for my lord, and we stood in the rain on the open moor while I told them all. My poor old uncle! His head went down in his hands, and I heard him murmur,

"My boy—my boy!" and Glengarry bowed his head as to an inevitable decree.

"Heaven has willed it, kinsman," he said. "A curse has fallen on this unhappy country, and we must e'en submit."

"But Ian——" I began eagerly.

"It is no good, Nigel," quoth my uncle, "I have spoken, and he can do naught."

"I know what you fain would say, Nigel," said my cousin, "but it is impossible. Let us walk on, for it is late, and I will tell you."

So we moved on, I leading my horse, struck dumb by Glengarry's tragic tones.

"I have five hundred Campbell claymores quartered on the border of my country," he said. "Twice since you left us, four years ago, my lands have been harried and burnt. My people live in



constant dread of Campbell fire and sword. If Montrose himself were here with an army we would take the risk again and rise as one man; but I cannot without that guarantee ask them to rise. If I sent the fiery cross among them to-night, to-morrow those Campbells would burst upon us. As it is I have only one third of the fighting men I had when I joined you before Inverlochy. You know I would give my own life for your Chief any day. I never desire to fight under a better soldier, or a more gallant gentleman; but I must consider my people first. You will find the same all over Scotland. Believe me, Inchbraikie, even your Atholemen will not risk a rising unless Montrose himself summons them. I hear that men are flung into the Tolbooths for just saying a good word for him, and that the ministers preach against him Sabbath after Sabbath. I was discussing the matter with Locheil only two or three months ago, and he agreed with me entirely. You will not get a Cameron to move any more than you will a Mac-Donald—and I do not wonder. Look at that hare-brained attempt of the MacKenzies—fools!"

Every word Glengarry said struck dismay into my heart. I knew full well he was aware of the temper of the Highlanders, as we, after long absence, could not be. It was on the tip of my tongue to say that if he had supported the MacKenzies, Pluscardine might have been successful; but I should utterly have offended him by such a remark, for the Mac-Donalds and the MacKenzies were at feud; so I held my tongue with difficulty and presently mine uncle said

"Nigel, I perceive it is as Glengarry says. I came here after the battle, having first sought in vain for Montrose, hoping that peradventure I might raise a force to rescue him. Now I shall return to find him to-morrow, for at least I can die with him."

"I go with you, sir," I answered, and as I spake we stopped at a large farmhouse, where one of Glengarry's clansmen took us in for the night and entertained us most hospitably. But I thought the venison would have choked me, and the whiskey so brought Robin before me that I could not drink a drop of it. Half an hour later, as I threw myself on my bed, I felt I was lying on something hard. I thrust my hand into my pocket—it was the silver clasp of Ralph's prayer-book. I drew it out, hardly knowing what I was doing, and opening it at hazard mine eyes fell on the words: "The peace of God which passeth all understanding."

Peace! I could have flung the little book away. Peace? Oh, my God! Hell!



CHAPTER XX.

"AND IT SHALL RETURN UNTO THEE AFTER MANY DAYS."

ON the following day the Laird of Inchbraikie and I bade farewell to Glengarry, who supplied us with horses, and we rode away to the south-east, through the MacKenzie country. At first my uncle was very silent, and I noted how white and drawn his face was, and how he sat his horse not erectly as aforetime, but as some old, old man. After awhile he began to talk, not of our plans, but of my lord when he was a bairn. I hearkened willingly enough as Uncle Patrick told me how great had been his delight in the child, which I could well understand. One tale so pleased me that I have never forgotten it, and set it down here.

It appeared that the former Earl of Montrose, when he lay dying, had spoken much with my lord, his son (then a lad of fourteen), giving him wise counsel for the future, and saying at the last:

"Forget not, son, the words of Holy Writ—'He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a

city;'" for my lord in his youthhood was very quick of temper.

On the Sabbath after his father died, the young Earl walked on the terrace at Kincardine with Uncle Patrick, showing him all that was in his heart, for he loved mine uncle above all his kinsmen. At the end of their converse, my lord, fixing his eyes on the Laird, quoth, very earnestly:

"I will be a good Earl, Cousin Patrick, but I must take a city too!"

My dear, brave young lord, facing life so eagerly—how little could he see all it would bring forth for him!

We lodged that night with a MacKenzie Laird, who had been in the war five years ago. He gave us fresh horses, and saw us on our way on the morrow. At mid-day I parted company with my uncle—he rode off to Forfarshire to see about a ship, if we could make an escape for my lord, and I went to glean such news of him as I might. I learnt that Leslie was about to pass through Inverness, and leaving my horse tied to a tree in a little wood three or four miles from the city, I entered it one fair May morning, and beheld a great company of people beginning to disperse. I mingled among them, and heard that Leslie and his prisoners had arrived but a few minutes since, and were lodged in the Castle. It was thought they would leave early on the morrow.

I was turning away to find some quiet hostelry in which to break my fast, when a young gallant *came* clattering down from the Castle on a white



horse, and the crowd made way for him. There was so round and boyish a face under the steel cap that I was singularly attracted by it, and at the same time convinced that I had seen it before; yet I sought in my memory in vain. Anon I went into a neighbouring change-house and ordered a pot of ale and some meat. While I was eating in a quiet corner, I heard loud tones and steps, and three or four officers entered. With them was the rider of the white horse. I was straining my ears to listen to their converse in hopes of gaining some news of my lord, when the eldest of the party said emphatically:

"Weel, ye may be richt, gentlemen, but if ye had fought under Gustavus Adolphus ye wad ken better than to gibe at a fallen foe in sic an unseemly fashion—and——"

"Henderson, Henderson," interrupted a younger man, "ye ken not what ye say—ye were not wi' us in '44 or '45. This fellow is possessed by Satan—an outcast—yea, excommunicate——"

"Yet he beareth himself with gallantry enow," returned Henderson. "Where cude ye find so braw a spirit—and he wounded too, and sair forfoughten? But" (and he turned on a sudden to the boy) "Keith should ken; he is with him daily."

I observed with interest how the lad coloured at the sudden appeal, and seemed taken aback.

"I—I—in truth, sirs," he began, "there is about him a singular graciousness and—and—much nobleness of demeanour. Yet Colonel Wallace telleth me that these are but traps which he layeth to catch the unwary—and that it is all but a mask to hide



the real evil of his nature. It may be so, but—well, it boots not."

"Colonel Wallace," observed one, "is ane verra canny man. He espieth the corners of James Graham's heart. Doubtless——"

Here a bugle sounded from the Castle, and all rose but Keith, who said somewhat of being off duty till mid-day, and sat on alone. As soon as they were gone, I went across to the young man's table.

"May I have the honour of a word with you, sir?" I asked, speaking with the soft Gaelic accent, for I was clad in a kilt.

He drew himself up, and asked haughtily, "What do you want with me, fellow?"

"Six years ago," I said, "we met near the border. You and your uncle, Sir Andrew Keith, were attacked by robbers, and I came to the rescue."

I had sat down beside him, and spoke in low tones. He looked at me fixedly, and answered:

"Yes, I ken you. But, Mr. Graham, are you prudent to be here?"

"I am a Highland kern, for the present," I answered. "This tartan should be my passport—curse it!—through Inverara itself—and I have the Gaelic as well as any Campbell. But now to business. First—for the love of God tell me—how is he—how fares he?"

"He fares ill, Mr. Graham, but methinks he is better to-day in health. You were at Invercarron?"

"Yea, and at Assynt," I answered briefly, "but I have not seen him since. Tell me."



The lad's face was troubled, and he flushed with shame at the thought of what his party was rejoicing in.

"He is led forth day by day," he answered, through town and country, on a Highland pony, and he is sore wounded, but yet Leslie will not suffer a leech to attend to him. They jeer at him—and I can see sometimes that he can hardly sit the nag, yet his dignity never faileth him, nor his patience and gentleness. It is marvellous. I do what I can for his comfort, but it is naught. Colonel Wallace is in charge of him, and he is an hard man—besides, the General's orders are strict."

I sat speechless, and then Alan Keith added, "If I were not a soldier of the Covenant, I would die to save him."

"But——" I asked.

He shook his head.

"I may not go back from my oath," he said. "I will do what I can for him short of abetting his escape. But that—no!"

"If it can be so managed at any time that I can see him——" I began.

He shook his head.

"Impossible! I fear me. It is at great risk that I meet you, Mr. Graham. I must pray of you to be very wary, for my sake as well as for your own."

I assured him that I would be prudence itself, and having obtained from him the information that they left for Keith on the following day,

reluctantly let him go, as he had to return to the Castle.

I saw my dear lord leave the city on the morrow. I saw him as Keith told me he would be, and a herald rode before him, blowing a trumpet, and crying aloud:

"Here cometh James Graham, a traitor to his country!"

But for the thought that I might contrive my lord's escape, I would have run in and throttled that foul lie in the fellow's throat. As it was, I could in no wise bear it, and fled away, resolving, if possible, never to see that shameful procession more. Yet the desire was so strong in me to set eyes on my lord and seek to gauge the pain and suffering he endured behind the outward calm which never failed him, that more than once I mingled with the people who gathered in the villages, or, later, flocked the streets of Keith to see him pass.

It was a Saturday night at Keith, and all the Sabbath the army lay in the fields without the town. In the afternoon many people went to the camp, some to stare at my lord, some to hear Mr. Kinammond preach—a very godly man, so I was told—and I went also.

A stile served the minister for his pulpit. The field was full of officers and soldiers; even Leslie himself was there, and such of the townsfolk as could find standing place. In the field were many tents; nearest to the stile was my lord's, with the flap caught back that he might miss no word of the discourse, and well guarded by musketeers. Then



I saw him come to the door of the tent and, a little stool being set for him, he sat thereon wearily enough I could see, but ready to listen to the sermon with all respect. The Rev. Mr. Kinammond was a tall, lean man, hungry-eyed, and full of gestures, so that, as he waved the great sleeves of his black gown and pointed at my lord with long, thin fingers, it caused me to think of some vulture hovering above his prey; and without more ado, he cried:

"In the thirty-third verse of the fifteenth chapter of the first book of Samuel it is written, 'As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women.'"

The while he fixed a glaring eye upon my noble lord, who gave ear patiently, though there was no doubting the preacher's meaning. The opening of the discourse never shall I forget.

"Surely, my brethren," said he, "the Lord hath this day given you a great mercy, and a great responsibility—a great mercy, for that He hath delivered Satan bound into our hands, and a great responsibility in dealing with him; but the Word of God never faileth us, and here we learn what the Almighty would have us do. 'And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord.'"

Then he turned him on my lord, as if he would rend him in twain, and poured forth a volley of abuse, blaming him for every action he had done or left undone all the days of his life, and cursing him for all the present distress in the country. I, wedged in between two stout citizens of Keith, with more behind me, and troopers in front, could not move.



I tried not to hearken, but only to fasten my eyes on my lord's still, calm face, but the foul slanders rang in my ears. Then, after he had for nigh on half an hour poured out the vials of his wrath, he overshot the mark. He had bethought him that he might wound Montrose more deeply through his friends, and he termed the Queen of Bohemia an accursed woman, and more also—with which I will not sully these pages. Then my lord flamed up. He rose from the stool, with hand raised to stop the half-uttered words—ay, and he stopped them too. Not a word spake he, but the blaze of anger in his face was enough. Kinammond shrank back before him. Yet my lord's heat was gone in a moment. A smile—with no scorn in it, but a great pity—passed over his face.

"Rail on, rail on," he said quietly, and turned him into the tent, nor was he to be more seen all through the afternoon.

The discourse was not above a quarter of an hour longer, and I noted with satisfaction that the minister was not entirely at his ease again, and lacked somewhat of his earlier eloquence.

About four o'clock all the company began to disperse. I also moved away, but did not go far. There was a tract of heath near, with gorse-bushes in plenty and some stunted firs. The morning had been fine, but now the sky was overclouded, and the wind was moaning in the trees as it doth before a storm. I slipped unobserved into a thicket and there lay down, eating a cake of oatmeal that I had with me, and turning over in my mind a plan I

had devised during the discourse. In four hours it was dusk, the wind roared loudly, and a wet mist swept over the fields. I sat me by one of the outermost gorse-bushes, which was but two or three yards from the path leading direct to the town. There was much passing for some time, and I had been watching nearly an hour when I recognised the walk and bearing of Allan Keith. Fortune favoured me—he was alone, and I stopped him. He glanced anxiously behind him.

"My servant is following me," he said. "What do you want with me, Mr. Graham?"

"Come in here," I pleaded, indicating the thicket. "Give me five minutes."

He followed me reluctantly. When we were well in concealment he observed,

"Do you realise how you are trusting me, sir? I have seen you again and again in the crowd. I could have you arrested at any time."

"Our confidence," I returned, "is mutual. I might have half a dozen friends here who, in their present mood, would dirk a Covenanter with as little regret as they would some savage beast."

"True, Mr. Graham," he made answer, "but the point is I am a soldier of the Covenant, and here am I in communication with a malignant, who would lay down his life to win my Lord Montrose's freedom."

"A thousand lives," I said. "But let me be frank—I have, at present—if you will take the word of a Scottish Cavalier—no plan whatever for my lord's escape." I saw that he looked immensely relieved, and I continued. "But I must see him—I tell you I

must. Why not to-night? It is dark and stormy. Could I not creep into his tent unobserved? How is he guarded? You have my promise—on oath if you will—that I will not implicate you."

He stood for a space playing with his sword-knot and turning the business over in his mind. At last he said in a low, hurried tone,

"The tent is well guarded outside by musketeers. I am alone with him from midnight onwards," and, turning on his heel, he almost ran off before I could say another word.

That night, as soon as I had heard a distant clock chime the midnight hour, I came out of the thicket and stole towards the nearest hedge. I found, after a little search, a gap I had marked earlier in the day, and by it I entered a field dotted over with tents, and men lying under the hedges to gain some shelter from the driving rain. I crawled slowly and with the greatest caution across the field. The mist and darkness of the night contributed in no small measure to my safety; on the other hand, I was in danger of running into sentries, and had to hearken most carefully for their footfalls on the soft wet turf. My lord's tent was in the next field, and it was more than half an hour after leaving my thicket that I lay on the ground a dozen yards from it.

I soon perceived that four musketeers were passing back and forth in pairs, two on the one side of the tent and two on the other. For some time I waited in vain for a chance of creeping past them. Then on a sudden I observed a dim figure was standing at the opening of the tent, and heard Keith's voice



summoning two of the soldiers to speak with him. Thus, for a moment, one side was left unguarded. I crept swiftly to it, raised the canvas softly, and crawled under. Then I rose to my feet, unperceived in the shadow. A dim lamp, set on a stool, burned feebly. Mine eyes fell on a pile of heather in the extreme back of the tent, and there my dear lord lay, an old plaid thrown over him, and his face turned from me. Ere I could go to him Keith returned and saw me.

"One hour you may have," he whispered, "not more. The sentries will be changed at two. You can slip out then on the side you have come in. He knows you are coming."

As he spake he picked up the lamp, and moving the stool to the forepart of the tent he sat thereon, holding the lamp in front of him. I stole to my lord's side, and putting forth my hands, found them grasped by both his.

"My dear lad," quoth he, "if 'twere not the last time I should chide you for this madness."

"Not the last, sir," I cried, "prithee say not so—it cannot be. I am to meet my uncle in two days at Old Montrose, and surely together we can devise some plan."

"I am too well guarded," he answered. It is impossible—besides I have had, since the time we left Assynt, an inward conviction that this is the end."

I broke forth in protests, yet all the while my heart echoed his words, and methought of the ancient seer at Assynt. Then my lord rose and made me



wrap the plaid about me, for I was very wet and cold, while he took from the couch a thick military cloak, which he told me Keith lent him night by night. He drew it round him, and sat on the heather, and I by him—his hand on my shoulder.

Hardly a word could I say, and he, perceiving it, talked much himself, while I gave ear gladly. First he charged me with messages for many of his friends and kinsmen, saying what a joy their love and leal friendship had ever been to him. He was wondrously calm, so that I, knowing well how his life had been bound up in theirs, and theirs in his, could only marvel. Only once when he mentioned the Princess his voice shook a little. Then he spake of his end, and of how, in such a cause as he knew his to be, he gloried in the indignities they put upon him, and how, for the King's sake, it was sweet to die—so that I perforce caught somewhat of his spirit. Anon we sat silent for a long space, till I began to fear every moment that Keith would turn and sign to me to be gone.

"Nigel," quoth my lord at last, and I mind how the words thrilled me at the moment, and were the one far-off ray of hope that lighted me through the dark days that followed. "Nigel, you remember that afternoon when we sat on the crags above Glenternie, and talked of those who had passed away from earth? We wondered if they were permitted to know aught of those they loved here. If it be so, let me ever see you a loyal, God-fearing gentleman." And then he added very softly, "True friendship is stronger than death or time, lad. We



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only begin it here to renew it in our Father's house beyond."

Even as he spake Keith rose, and I knew the time had come. I clasped my dear lord's hand in mine for one brief moment. Then I crept away—out into the darkness and the storm.

CHAPTER XXI.

COUSIN ELISABETH.

TWO days later I reached the familiar braes of Angus, and as evening drew on, I knew myself to be only a mile or so from the outlying cottages of Old Montrose. I had sold my horse to a loyal farmer of Aberdeenshire, as I deemed I should attract less attention on foot, and I was in need of money. I was casting my mind back to those happy times when I had often trod that very path with my lord and John, when I perceived approaching me the figure of a simple fellow who in old times had been much attached to Montrose.

Some thirty years ago this innocent, then a mere bairn of six or seven, had been seized upon by the Lairds of Claverse and Orchill, who were staying at the Castle, and were about the same age. They tied the poor loon to a tree, mocking him and jibing at him, when by came my young lord. When he saw their mean sport he shouted to them to desist, and on their refusal fought them both, the one after the other, till they prayed for mercy and fled away to the Castle. Then my lord cut with his knife the *bonds of* "Witless Gibbie," as the folk called him,



and from that day onwards the poor creature was eager to do him service. More than once during the war he had brought us news of the enemy, and I deemed it likely that he had now brought me a message from Inchbraikie, as he ambled down the path to meet me, wagging his head and making mouths as was his wont.

It was as I thought. He put a letter into my hand and mumbled somewhat of the Master of Gorthie, and "ane English body wi' him." I hastily opened the note, and in much dismay read the contents. It was indeed from Gorthie, to the effect that he and Geoffrey Warden had escaped together to the south, and there fallen in with Inchbraikie; who only two days since had been arrested at Old Montrose in fisherman's guise, and sent down to Edinburgh.

"Thither we go also," concluded Gorthie, "and I pray you follow us if Gibbie finds you with this, for all the country is being so carefully watched that to attempt an escape for my lord seemeth at present impossible. Perchance somewhat may be done at Edinburgh. Geoffrey and I are distraught. They say he is treated as if he were some wild beast. You know where to find us, and so I rest your affectionate kinsman,

"MUNGO GRAHAM."

It was with a heavy heart that I hid myself that night in a glen some miles further south. Gibbie was with me, and I let him choose my resting-place,

for no one knew the country-side as he did; and the good soul produced from his pocket a pasty and some oat cakes which his old mother had made for me. I told him all, and the poor loon lifted up his voice and sobbed aloud, and all the night he moaned like some animal in pain, so that had I been minded to sleep it would have been no easy task. I gathered from him in return tidings of many whom I had known in old days. I learnt also that a report had first been spread that my dear lord had fallen in battle, on which James (who, as you remember, was at Kinnaird in his grandfather's keeping with Robin and David), demanded leave of my Lord Southesk to join the Stirlings abroad. The Earl had refused, but James had secretly left Old Montrose in a trading ship for Schiedam nearly ten days before. I was exceeding grieved to hear this, for I doubted whether the lad would ever see his father on earth again, and I was charged with a message from my lord for Archibald Napier and Sir George to the effect that Montrose desired the three boys to join their kinsmen abroad as soon as it could be arranged —so that James had only anticipated his father's wish, and had lost thereby more than he knew.

The next morning I bade poor Gibbie farewell, and set my face to the south. I had changed my kilt for the clothes of a farmer's knave, and I had cut my hair short long since, so that I saw no reason why I should not pass as a country laddie going to Edinburgh to seek his fortune.

A day or two later I saw the city lying before me, and made my way to Merchiston, where I knew I



should hear news of Gorthie and Warden if I did not find them actually there. Archibald's wife was permitted to remain there with her six bairns while her husband was in exile; but I knew she was subject to rigorous inspection, and just now the Covenanters would be fully on the alert, in case she should be harbouring fugitive Royalists. I waited therefore till dusk, and then stole into the garden by a door in the wall—you know the door, children, and the long straight path which leads up to the house. In those days I had never been there, and so, when I got into the house, I knew not where I should go, hearing no sound. I saw a staircase before me, and mounted it softly. At the top I stood facing a door slightly ajar, and from the room within a shrill, childish voice issued,

"It is my turn to be Perseus now, Archie."

There came a reluctant assent, followed by,

"Avaunt, foul monster! Behold the Gorgon's head and die!"

It so brought to my mind the old games with Lilias and John, in our playroom at Kincardine, that for a moment I was diverted beyond measure and stepped into the room. A fair-haired, delicate-looking laddie, Archibald Napier's son to his finger-tips, was on the floor on his hands and knees, opening his mouth for a roar. Two more boys—evidently his brothers—were rolling about on their bed, and it was obvious from their attire that the whole party should have been going to sleep. They were stricken dumb at the sight of me, and drew together with some apprehension—so at least the three I have

mentioned. The slayer of the Gorgon was not so daunted. He seemed the youngest of the four, certainly not above five or six, but he flourished his wooden sword at me, and said loftily,

"What want you here, fellow? This is our bed-chamber. If you seek Lady Napier you will find her below with my mother."

"I do seek Lady Napier," I said, "but who are you? These are Archibald's children, but you are not."

I think the little lad before me was the most beautiful child I have ever seen, very dark and handsome; he called David to my mind, then John, as he threw back his dark curls and announced,

"I am John Graham. My father is the Laird of Claverse. And please, who are you?"

Then I knew how it was, for his mother was Jean Carnegie, cousin-german to the late Marchioness of Montrose.

I explained to my little cousins who I was, and they gathered round me, half-eager, half-awed, asking shyly for their father, while little John grew very red, and said,

"I crave your pardon, sir, I thought you were some Covenanting knave."

"Do they come often?" I asked.

"Oh, yes," cried Archibald, "nearly every day, and they search the house. Some were here yesterday—but we will not tell them you are here, and I know"—dropping his voice mysteriously—"that my mother hath a secret hiding-place, where you can be quite safe."



"Suppose you take me to her now," I suggested, and they were forthwith my escort down long, dark passages to another wing of the house, Archibald marching ahead, John leading me by the hand, and the other two following. At length they knocked at a door and held it open for me, and I, entering a pleasant lamplit chamber, beheld Lady Elisabeth Napier seated at work, and near her a young dark-haired lady, whom I knew to be little John's mother. They both started up in astonishment and some alarm while John announced,

"This is Cousin Nigel, he hath come to hide in the secret cupboard."

At once Lady Napier hastened towards me with outstretched hand, "Glenternie—Nigel—is it in truth you? You are indeed welcome to Merchiston."

I saw but one question in each lady's face, so I told them forthwith that their husbands were left behind at Hamburg with the reinforcements. This greatly cheered them, and then, sending the little ones back to their beds, they asked for Montrose, and wept pitifully when I related somewhat of my lord's condition. They set before me meat and wine, and when I had refreshed myself, we sat together till long past midnight, talking of all that was—yea, and of all that might have been.

I heard from them that Gorthie and Geoffrey Warden were in Edinburgh, lodging with Master Forrett, who lived there and was let alone by the Estates, being old and simple. And in truth he cared not for politics. Only one thing he loved above his books, and that was the laddie he had taught and



trained twenty years before, and so for my lord's sake he kept open house for every fugitive Cavalier in Scotland.

The ladies looked at me appealingly when they had told all as if I must of a surety have some new plan to raise their spirits. I could only shake my head. "It is the end," I said, and for a long space we were silent.

Then the Lady of Claverse rose and slipped away softly, deeming that I might wish to speak with Cousin Elisabeth alone. I hardly observed her go, and only found we were alone—a young boor she must have thought me, for never opening the door for her. I did not know Archibald's wife at all well, but sorrow drew us together, and in truth she was a lady of such sweet and gracious demeanour that there was no holding aloof from her. Anon the wail of a babe reached our ears, and praying me to excuse her, she ran from the room returning ere long with her youngest in her arms.

"You will not mind this little one, Glenternie?" she said. "I keep but one maid-servant, and tend the children myself that I may send the more money to Archibald."

Then she hushed the babe to sleep, and meanwhile drew from me all the story of our disastrous campaign, and of my dear lord's grievous suffering; and when I could say no more for sorrow and wrath, she spake to me comfortably and led me on to tell her of Margaret, whom Archibald had mentioned to her in a letter. I observed that as soon as the babe slumbered, she worked with her needle with great



diligence at some handsome black cloth which she was lining with scarlet, and seeing mine eye fall on the work, she said,

"This is for mine uncle. Jean and I heard a rumour of how he was habited, and so we are making him this. It is difficult to judge of the size aright, but I am taking the measurements from an old suit of Archibald's, for they are much of a height and both slight."

I could have embraced her with gratitude as I minded my dear lord's rags. Now he would stand before the Estates—at least if he were permitted to change his garments—in a manner befitting his rank; and more he would know that through his time of sorest need there had been loving hands toiling for him.

Anon my kinswoman led me to the secret place of which little Archibald had told me. It was a small chamber cunningly contrived in the thick old wall, access being gained to it by means of a sliding panel. I rested there comfortably enough, and in the grey dawn came forth, and bidding my cousin farewell for the time, took my way to Edinburgh, and passed into the city unnoticed in the stream of country-people, for it was market-day. At Master Forrett's house I found Gorthie and Warden and my lord's secretary, Master Thomas Sydserf. As I looked round on them after the first greetings, I perceived that there was no spirit left in them. Geoffrey I hardly recognised, he looked so white, and thin, and wretched. I drew him apart, gave him Colonel Hewitt's letter, and told him all I could of his cousin.



He gave ear with a set face and compressed lips, and when I had ended he turned away and broke down utterly. We could say no word to cheer him, for our own hearts were too torn.

They told me all they had done, and how they had found that every possible plan for escape was frustrated by the vigilance of the Covenanters. The streets were to be most carefully guarded, and soldiers were never to leave my lord's cell, day or night. This was Thursday, and on Saturday he was expected. He would enter the city by the Watergate, and there would be a procession to the door of the Tolbooth; and then Gorthie half began to tell me more and stopped.

"Tell me all," I insisted. "What is this? Am I a babe that you should withhold aught from me? Have I not seen the worst that could be at Stonehaven and Keith?"

"I trow not," said Gorthie, "The worst is to come. Naught that can make death more bitter will be spared my lord. They will make him endure all the ignominy and shame they can devise. They are inflaming the people against him to the uttermost, so that he may be received with jeers and execrations. And more, they are hiring men—and women—the lowest of the people—to stone him as he goes to the Tolbooth. If they do—and I suppose they will—we are resolved to cut our way through the mob and the soldiers, and die in his defence. It may be useless, but my lord shall not perish thus at the hands of the fiends while we have swords and *lives*."

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TRIUMPH OF ARGYLL.

IT was the eve before the Sabbath, and nigh on five o'clock, when we who had taken up our position in the street below Master Forrett's house, heard sounds towards Holyrood, as if my dear lord were at last approaching. We had waited there in the dense crowd all the afternoon, every face around us fierce and eager with joy at the coming spectacle, so that ever and anon I looked up at the window above us, where Master Forrett and Lady Napier and the Lady of Claverse looked down with glances as anxious as our own. Little John was there too, and Archibald's eldest son, with scared looks on their round, chubby faces, so that I almost marvelled their mothers had brought them, yet it was right that they should be there. Years after, I asked John to come and stay at Glenternie; he was a stripling then, with wondrous beauty of face and form, and dreamy dark eyes; albeit he was very silent and shy.

"You will have forgotten me, kinsman," said I,



"it is ten years since you saw me, and you were little more than a babe."

He shook his head. "I remember you perfectly, sir," he said, "I shall never forget those days at Edinburgh."

His lips tightened as he spake, and his face lost all its gentleness for a moment. I once saw John Graham prepare to put a bullet through a prisoner's head, with as little mercy as he would show to a mad dog, and when I remonstrated, he said to me almost fiercely, "What mercy did they show him? Do *you* prate to me of mercy on the twenty-first of May?"

And when I urged my lord's mildness with all delinquents (save only at the sack of Aberdeen, for which there was good cause), John cast aside his pistol, and said, "Very well, he can go to Edinburgh to enjoy the boot, if you prefer." But I afterwards learned that the poor fellow went free.

Claverhouse will go down to posterity, I fear me, as an hard man (yet he has been far more merciful than those who work with him); but when tales come to me of his doings in the West, I think of a child's white face, pressed against that window at Edinburgh, and dark eyes, wide with horror, and I do not wonder.

"If one stone is cast!" whispered Gorthie in my ear, and I nodded and loosed my sword in its sheath; and straining our ears, we waited, hearing plainly the rumble of wheels and the sound of horses' hoofs and the tread of many feet. Yet no shouts

of execration, only a breathless hush, and while we marvelled greatly, he came in sight. Before, went the prisoners from Invercarron, two and two in chains. I marked Major Grey first and then Hurry, and then Geoffrey gripped my arm as Colonel Hewitt went by. There were many others, but the rest I saw not, for mine eyes were riveted on my lord. He was set forth in a villainous, little cart, so that all might behold him. In the cart was a wooden chair, upon which was my dear lord, tightly bound with rope, his hands tied behind him, and his head bare. Drawing the cart were three scurvy nags, and upon the foremost did the hangman sit. Thus was my noble lord paraded before the eyes of all Edinburgh, that the lowest of the people might wreak their vengeance on him. He faced the sea of faces with unflinching courage, yet not arrogantly, as if he scorned them, but rather rejoicing to bear insults in so good a cause; and there came to my mind a word he spake to me in the tent at Keith, "For the King, Nigel, I am proud to die." No wonder, then, that the crowd stood silent and amazed before such exaltation of demeanour, and if the crowd, how much more we who bore him such exceeding love.

All the day I had been thinking to myself what it might have been. He had hoped to ride into Edinburgh at the head of a triumphant army, to the skirl of pipes and the tuck of drum, and therefore, must not the contrast of being dragged through the street to a felon's doom be all the more humiliating? But when I saw him it flashed

on me that this was his triumph for those who could see it. No better end could there be to a life so spent in the service of King and country, than in sealing his devotion with his blood—and was he not?—I knew he was—I saw it in the wondrous light in his eyes and in the half-smile on his lips—proud to follow where the King he loved so passionately had led the way. His very glance held in check the angry rabble that five minutes since had been thirsting for his blood. A rough-looking wench at my side had dropped the stone she was about to cast, and was sobbing aloud. I turned to my friends, and as I met their gaze, perceived in a moment that something of my thoughts had been passing through their minds also. Geoffrey even smiled—pitifully enough, but still it was a smile — in answer to my look, and we all four stood with bared heads—we could do no more—as the cart passed by. Then we pressed on as best we might, desiring to lose no sight of my lord till the gloomy portals of the Tolbooth hid him from our gaze, and thus we beheld such a sight, that the memory of it to-day maketh my old pulse beat quicker for very joy. You have heard the tale ofttimes, children, but I must needs set it down once more. I spake above of my lord's triumph, even in the days of his failure. Seemed they to you mere empty words? I will show you how true they were.

Presently the cart halted below a balcony, and lifting mine eyes I saw seated there in state, that most accursed man, Argyll. He it was, we well knew,



who controlled every arrangement concerning my lord's treatment; he it was who spared my dear lord no shame and no disgrace that his evil mind could devise. I pointed him out to Geoffrey—the lank hair, the furtive look, and the crooked eyes. I had only seen him once, years ago, but it was not a face to forget. With him was a young, gaily dressed lady, and a gentleman, whom I took to be my Lord Lorne. I at once perceived why the cart was halted—it was that the Campbells might, at leisure, make sport of their fallen foe. So utterly at their mercy did my dear lord seem, that Gorthie and I had our swords half out instinctively, and then we noted that my lord had raised his head and was facing Argyll. I would I could have seen the look in Montrose's face then, for he spake no word; but my Lord Argyll rose nervously from his seat, looking this way and that; very pale he turned, even to the lips, and hastening away through the open window was seen no more. A murmur ran through the crowd, and a man near the balcony shouted up somewhat to the Campbells in a voice of scorn, but I could not hear what he said. A scene worthy to ponder over, surely! All that the world could give was Argyll's—success, wealth, influence, position—yet at what cost had it been won! "For what shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

When all was over, I returned to Master Forrett's and sought at once for Cousin Elisabeth. Somehow, Archibald's sweet and gracious lady had not only won all our hearts, but had taken, as it were,

command of us, and we neither went out nor came in without seeking her counsel.

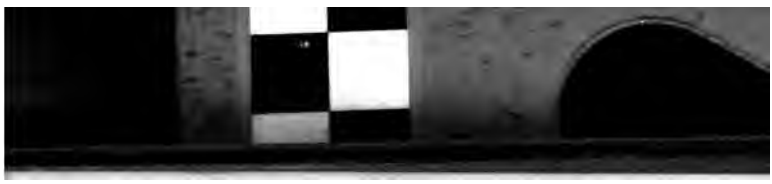
The old Dominie had prayed her to make all the use of his house she desired, so she had decided to abide there till Tuesday was over, while the Lady of Claverhouse returned to Merchiston to take care of the bairns. Little Archibald and John were to have gone back, but they prayed so to stay, that they were permitted, and I found her sitting with them, each in bed, with a bowl of bread and milk before them. She rose at once and came to me. She spake no word, but her eyes shone as they met mine, and she signed to me to follow her into the next room. There, on the table, lay the rich suit which I had seen her working, and with it a beaver hat, and shoes, and stockings of incarnate silk.

"I have gotten leave to send these to Montrose through the advocacy of my Lord Provost," she said. "He was a friend of my father-in-law's in old days."

"By whose hand will you send them, cousin?" I asked; my heart leaping at the thought in my mind.

"You shall take them, Nigel, yourself," she made answer, "in the guise of my serving-man. I will do up the package now, and you shall have your supper, and then you shall array yourself in my servant's clothes, which I have here."

At seven o'clock I set forth, Gorthie walking with me to the door of the Tolbooth, and reminding me, to the last moment, that I must not forget that



I was only Lady Napier's servant, for Margaret's sake.

I presented the Provost's letter to the sentry on guard, and demanded to see the Governor of the Tolbooth. I was taken inside, and after waiting some minutes in a small, gloomy chamber, a turnkey entered and bade me follow him. The damp, close feeling of the air recalled to my mind my sojourn there five years ago. We turned from a narrow, stone passage into a hall, lit by torches, at the further end of which two elderly gentlemen stood together talking. And I caught the words, "Yea, yea, Keith, I mind well enough. The loons would aye be shouting for the bonnie Earl of Montrose, when he rode down the Canongate with his servants at the tail of him, and to think that it should have come to this! He has paid dearly enough for his ambition, I trow—yet he bears himself as if— Did you see that business at the balcony of Moray's house?"

And then they observed us, and turned sharply, while the turnkey louted low.

"Who are you, fellow, and what is your errand here?" quoth the one who had been speaking before.

Then, in the wild longing of my heart for one more word with Montrose and one last touch of his hand, I played a bold game. I turned me to the other gentleman, and fixed mine eyes with exceeding earnestness on the kindly face of Sir Andrew Keith.

"So please you, sirs," I said, "I am my Lady Napier's servant, and I have here a package of clothes



for my Lord Montrose. It is permitted by my Lord Provost."

Both Sir Andrew and his companion—whom I afterwards discovered to be the Provost himself—started and looked more closely on me, for I spake as no groom would, but in my ordinary voice—and this with intention. I perceived in a moment that Sir Andrew recognised me, and drawing the Provost aside, they held whispered converse together, while I watched their faces anxiously. At last the Provost shrugged his shoulders and said,

"An' you will—but have a care."

The old knight signed to the turnkey to be gone, and then saying, "Follow me," led the way out of the hall and down a passage to the head of a flight of stone steps, which we descended, hearing as we did so the sound of laughter and rough voices. On the stairs Sir Andrew stopped a moment, and said in a low tone, "You will only have a minute or two with him, and you must leave him on the instant when I tell you."

I promised obedience, and a moment later we stood before a very heavy iron door, bolted and barred, with a sentry on guard as well.

"Open, knave," quoth Sir Andrew; and when the bolts were drawn back, and the ponderous door swung slowly open, I looked eagerly over Sir Andrew's shoulder into the cell. It was but dimly lit by one candle; on a bench near the door three troopers lounged and drank together. The air was foul and close, reeking of tobacco too, to which savour my lord had ever the



greatest aversion from a child. There was a little table in the place, and by it stood a man of most repellant countenance, who, with sneers and oaths and all manner of villainous language, was reviling my dear and noble lord, who sat on a rough pallet at the further end of the cell, with a face very white and wearied.

I started forward with a clenched hand, but Sir Andrew gripped my arm, while he said,

"Major Weir, the Provost is in the hall, and desireth speech of you. I will take your place here in the meanwhile."

The major looked somewhat surprised, but he thanked Sir Andrew, and left the cell at once; and then to my joy, as soon as his steps were heard on the stone stair, the knight turned to the troopers and announced that he wished for privy speech with the prisoner, whereon they all left the cell.

"You nearly settled the matter then, Mr. Graham," he said, shaking his white head, and he added more about young blood being hot and I know not what else, for by that time I was at my lord's feet, kissing his fettered hands.

"Nigel—laddie—once more—this is a joy I had not dared to hope for—I am much indebted to you, sir."

"My dear lord," I cried, "this is hell. How can you endure it? Oh, that I might stay with you!"

"Nay, lad, that could not be," quoth my lord, "and it is not for long—only till Tuesday, they say—thank God."

The last words came out suddenly, almost involuntarily, and their tone showed me somewhat at least of what he was enduring. Our time was very short, it seemed to me hardly a minute. I gave him the parcel, and he said,

"Convey my best thanks to Betty, and tell her that if she can secure what she once asked of me one summer evening at Merchiston, to take it with my love and every blessing for herself and Archibald." He had given me messages for his friends when I saw him at Keith, but not for his boys, thinking to see all three at Kinnaird; so now he said, "I have writ to James—it was permitted at Kinnaird—I would I had seen him, though. See that he hath my sword—the one the King gave me—I left it in Harry's keeping."

I felt Sir Andrew was anxious for me to be gone, and my lord saw it, and so rose. And as he did so he slipped a ring from his finger into my hand.

"Take it to Rhenen," he whispered. "Tell her —but no need to tell her—she knows."

"Mr. Graham should be going, sir," interposed Sir Andrew here. "Your guards must enter ere Weir returns, or there may be difficulties."

"I am deeply grateful to you, sir," said my lord, "for your exceeding kindness."

I know not how I made my farewell. I could speak no word, and all seemed dark and misty, only I know that I heard my dear lord's voice saying, "Courage, lad. The time may be long but the day will come—" And when I next realised where I

was, I stood in the street, and Gorthie, appearing from somewhere, took my arm.

"So you have seen him?" he observed, but he asked no more, nor could I have told him then. Later, at Master Forrett's, I related to them all that had passed. I also gave my kinswoman the strange message from my lord, and learnt its purport, of which more anon.

On the Sabbath we went to no kirk, knowing well of what nature the prayers and the sermon would be—and in truth we heard afterwards that the ministers did naught but revile the people for not stoning my lord. I bided in the house all day, talking with old Master Forrett, and drawing from him the story of much of Montrose's boyhood that I had never known before.

I was going up the stairs to my chamber in the gloaming when I met little Archibald and John. I tarried to talk to them, for I have always found that when I am in grief children can distract me, and for the moment change my thoughts as naught else can.

"My mother is going to read to us now," said Archibald.

"Will you come and listen too, Cousin Nigel?" quoth little John, who had been of a very friendly humour towards me from the first.

I was willing enough, so they led me to Cousin Elisabeth's chamber, and prayed her to let me come too. Then they brought each a stool to her feet and sat thereon, while she in clear sweet tones read to us the words of Holy Writ and expounded

them to the boys; yet I know that she meant it for me also, when she spake of those who "came out of great tribulation," and of the land where sorrow and parting are no more.

Presently we fell to talking of my lord, and the boys gave ear gladly while I told them of how I had first learnt to love him seventeen years before, when I had been a little lad no bigger than John. Afterwards they went to bed, but I sat with Cousin Elisabeth for long. I hardly realised then all that her presence was to me through that week; but looking back, I thank God that I found in the darkest days of my life so true and wise a friend.

CHAPTER XXIII.

AT THE MARKET CROSS.

EACH day at Edinburgh seemed to me interminable, and ever since I had seen my lord's condition I prayed that the end might soon come. On Monday we set forth at an early hour, and took up our position near the door of the Parliament House, where at ten of the clock my lord was to come to hear his sentence read. Only those were to enter who had permission, so that we could not go in, but stayed near the door to see him go by. We saw Argyll pass, having my Lord Lorne and other kinsmen with him, and I recognised the Provost. With him was Sir Andrew Keith, attended by his nephew. The lad was very pale, and when he stooped on a sudden quite near me to fasten the latchet of his shoe, I saw that his hand shook so that he could hardly do it. Then, after many others had entered, came my lord on foot with his guards. They passed in and the great door was shut.

I heard in after days from Alan Keith how nobly my dear lord bore himself while the Chancellor railed on him for a long space, calling him "perjured"

and "inhuman," and such like epithets. It was nine years since he had stood there, and I have heard my Lord Napier tell how he had then cast these words in the teeth of a corrupt and disloyal house. "My resolution is to carry along fidelity and honour to the grave!" I wondered if those words came back to his judges now. They knew—they must have known that he had kept that resolve. Which of them could have so spoken?

I learnt from Keith that after some demurring my lord was permitted to speak, which he had craved very earnestly, and then in a few simple words he showed them how he had ever cleaved to one straight course, and how he had ever been faithful to the true spirit of the first Covenant, and how he now acted on the direct commands of the King they pretended to acknowledge. Then he claimed the right as a Christian, a fellow-subject, and a fellow-Scotsman, to be judged fairly and honourably by them. Even as he thus spake, someone opened the great doors, for the day was warm, and we outside, pressing into the outer hall, perceived him standing in the place of delinquents, his hat in his hand, his face lifted to the pitiless faces of his judges, and I saw him solemnly raise one hand, and heard his voice ring out,

"If otherwise—I do here appeal from you to the righteous Judge of the world, Who one day must be your Judge and mine, and Who always gives out righteous judgments."

Of mercy my lord wanted none, needed none, but just trial he demanded as his right. The only

answer the Covenanters made him was for Loudon to call on the Clerk to read the sentence of execution. My lord meanwhile was commanded to kneel. For one moment he hesitated, as if he could not bring himself to do so in such company; then he calmly knelt him down, but with head uplifted still and countenance unmoved, as the Laird of Warriston read the awful sentence with a glee—so Keith said—that he cared not to hide. He was at the further end of the hall, so that at first we could not hear much of what he said, but we had learnt already from the talk of the crowd on Saturday most of the barbarous details. My mind of a sudden went back to an autumn evening at the end of the war, when we halted at Auchterarder, where many gallant Grahams sleep their last sleep. My lord and I stood alone together on the soft green turf within the kirkyard wall, and he said musingly,

"I should lief lie here when my time cometh. It is a place of peace—but that is not likely."

His tone troubled me, and I said,

"Wherefore not, my dear lord?"

"There are Covenanters, Nigel, and carrion-crows to boot," he had answered lightly.

Had any presentiment of the future come to him, I wonder? Little thought I then what four years should bring forth, and that I should live to see those strong limbs that had fought so well for King and country, set up in the four chief cities of our realm, that right hand that had so often grasped mine in brotherly friendship, raised over the gate of Aberdeen, and that noble head set over the

Tolbooth, that all who passed by might mock, saying, "So may all traitors perish." As the Clerk read on, his voice became clearer to me, so that I heard all, and Gorthie perceiving that I could in no wise bear it, put his arm through mine and led me away to Master Forrett's.

All men deemed—all but we who knew him—that the terrible sentence would break my lord's proud spirit and bring him to crave for mercy, and so the tale that Sydserf brought to us that night had gone from mouth to mouth round a wondering city, wrought to the highest pitch of excitement over the morrow's tragedy. It appeared that my noble lord had risen after the second reading of the sentence by the Doomster and essayed to speak again, but Loudon had rudely checked him, and ordered his guards at once to remove him to the Tolbooth. There the magistrates of the city visited him, hoping, doubtless, that they might be the instruments of bringing him to "repentance," as the ministers had failed most completely in that matter. To their amazement they found him in a right joyous mood, and he thanked them courteously for the honour they had put on him.

"For," quoth he, "I think it is a greater honour to have my head fixed at the top of this prison than if ye had decreed a golden statue to be erected to me in the market place; and I am beholden to you that lest my loyalty should be forgotten, ye have appointed five of the chiefest cities of the kingdom to bear witness of it to posterity."

In such exaltation of spirit did my dear and noble lord meet his end. Perchance if I had been a prisoner too my spirit would have soared with his to such heights, but I had my long lonely life to live, and he whom I loved above all others was being torn from me. On the morrow a greater gulf would be fixed between him and us than any that could be made by the troopers of the Covenant or the walls of the Tolbooth, and though the record of his brave words made our hearts beat quicker, we sorrowed too exceedingly to catch his enthusiasm, and sat round, after Sydserf had joined us, the long night through in Master Forrett's dining-room, never a word speaking all the time.

* * * * *

This much I had written yesternight when Margaret came to me, and I said unto her, "Dear heart, I can write no more. How can I set down calmly all that passed on May 21st?"

But she read what I had already writ, and then gently urged me to continue, saying how our children would prize it, and how they knew but little of those dark days in Edinburgh, seeing it was but seldom that I could bring myself to speak of them. And so to-day I will write what I can.

* * * * *

We agreed to set out at noon, for though my lord would not come forth till three, we knew well great crowds would gather before the hour. I was in mine own chamber shortly before mid-day, when I heard soft tappings, and two curly heads were thrust round the door.



"May we enter, Cousin Nigel?" said little John—ever the spokesman.

"Of a surety," said I. "What would you?"

"My mother desireth speech of you, sir, before you go forth," said Archibald.

"And I pray you, Cousin Nigel," added John, "let us remain here to watch at this window, for we can see better here than from Master Forrett's study, and our rooms look not on the street."

"By all means," said I, whereupon they mounted the broad window-seat and looked out eagerly. I stood at the door for a moment listening to their converse. A troop of horse were passing below, and I saw John's fist clenched.

"Ye are wicked, wicked men," quoth he, wagging his head at them. "When I am a man I will kill you all."

"My mother saith," remonstrated Archibald, "that they are ignorant and ill-guided, and we ought to forgive them."

"I never shall," quoth John. "Will you be forgiving them, Cousin Nigel?"

"No, John," said I, "never," and I sought Cousin Elisabeth. I found her in the passage and others speaking with her.

"A privy word with you, Nigel," she said, and led me into a room near. She closed the door and turned to me with a singular tenderness in her face, laying one hand upon my shoulder, and saying gently, "Wilt not rest content here, Nigel, with me and the Dominie? I would fain you went not forth to-day. Sure I am it will be more than you can endure."

But I would not consent, and seeing me resolved, she sought no longer to detain me, so we went forth and chose a place where we could see the Market Cross, and beside it the great gallows thirty feet high, with a long ladder set up from the scaffold to a little platform where the hangman was to stand, and to which my dear lord must needs mount. As the hour drew nigh the crowds thickened on us so that all the city seemed gathered to the spot. Every window and every balcony was filled. Soldiers patrolled the street and kept a space clear round the scaffold. All was as for some great high day. Flags flew and garlands waved from many windows, and all the people were in holiday garb. A quarter before three, the Provost and the magistrates came into the market place and mounted the scaffold to receive my lord. Anon a clock chimed, and the noisy voices around us ceased, and every head was turned to look up the street. For a short space there was a breathless silence all about us; then Gorthie whispered,

"He is coming!"

We pressed as near as we could to the edge of the crowd, and sought to distinguish among the tramp of the guards the step we knew so well. A moment later he came in sight, while the very crowd held its breath and gaped upon him, silent and marvelling, for he bore himself as if he had been a king returning in triumph from his wars.

As he passed by he marked where we stood. But for our sakes he gave no sign, seeing that if he had we should all, like enough, have been clapped into the



Tolbooth without more ado; but he smiled a very little, so that none might observe it save we for whom it was meant. And then he gave one swift glance upwards, and I knew he would fain bring to my mind his last words in the tent at Keith—but how many long years would go by ere I should be permitted to stand at his side once more?

We watched him to the scaffold, and we saw he was speaking a few words to those around him (he had been forbidden to address the people). Sir Andrew Keith told me in later years that, as the last indignity they could devise, they sought to tie Dr. Wishart's noble book about his neck, and he with much sweetness did help them, saying that he was prouder to wear it than the garter which the King had sent him. And then he turned to the great ladder with such sure hope in his face, and exceeding peace upon his brow that all beholding him—even the bitterest of his foes—were greatly moved. As he mounted a strange sickening feeling, which had come upon me more than once while we waited there, crept over me irresistibly. The faces around me grew strange and blurred, and all the market place became very dark. Only my lord's form I still saw faintly, and he stood at the top of the gibbet. I heard him cry, "May God have mercy on this unhappy country!" Then as the hangman came near to cast him over I called aloud, "My lord, my dear lord!" stretched out my hands towards him, and knew no more.



CHAPTER XXIV.

FOR THE PRINCESS.

THE next thing I remember was opening mine eyes in a room in Master Forrett's house, and perceiving that I was laid on a couch, and the sweet face of Cousin Elisabeth was bending over me. For a moment I knew not what had passed, and then, as all began to return to my mind, I sprang up and besought her wildly to tell me if my lord was indeed dead—with a poor foolish hope in my heart that somewhat—I knew not what—had intervened to reprieve him. She essayed to speak, but for a moment could not, and I saw in her mournful gaze and quivering lips what I knew must be. Then I turned me back to the couch—for I could scarce stand—with an exceeding bitter cry, "I cannot live without him, I cannot!"

"You will not be grudging John his father once more?" she said gently. "Try to think of it thus, Nigel. And you would not—you said yourself yesternight—that these days of imprisonment were prolonged for him."

"But why," I cried, "oh, Cousin Elisabeth,



why is it that God letteth evil men succeed, yea, flourish like a green bay-tree, and the noble, the good——?"

"Methinks," she answered musingly, "that earthly success hath naught to do with God's favour towards us—we see that in Holy Writ—and then remember we see not to the end. Peradventure in twenty or thirty years' time, if we are still living—" ("Heaven forbid!" said I)—"we shall see for ourselves wherefore it was that my lord was taken in the very prime of his manhood. In the meantime, Nigel, can we not thank God that for a short space in our lives it hath been granted to us to know and love so noble a man?"

In such wise did my kinswoman speak to me words of comfort, and while she was with me I know not how it was yet the keenness of my misery abated somewhat. But when she left me later to go to the children, great anguish of soul laid hold on me. I tried to go over in my mind the seventeen years that I had known my lord, but could not, for the very thought of those old days made me realise my loss the more. Never again would I be at Kincardine with my dear lord; never again would I sit at his feet before the blazing hearth in the library on winter nights while he read aloud from Plutarch or Shakespeare; never again would I play golf with him on the links at Old Montrose, or shoot with him at the butts; never would I ride forth with him more to the chase or to war; never would I return with him to *Rhenen* with laurels won to claim those we loved.



As thus I lay overpowered with my grief, someone turned the handle of the door, and I heard low voices without.

"I will tell the lad; he will wish to go too."

It was Gorthie's voice. He ever spoke of me as "the lad." I should have resented it from many, but somehow I rather liked it from him. There was a little more talk. Then Gorthie said softly:

"Except for Her Royal Highness and the old Laird no one will feel it more."

Then he came in and sat down beside me. I liked the Master of Gorthie—so did all who knew him well, and my lord bore him great love, and I was glad it was he who was at Edinburgh now, and none other of my kinsmen.

"We have a plan afoot, Glenternie," he said.

"What boots it now if we have fifty?" I asked bitterly.

"It is our duty," he pursued quietly, "to comfort—if we may—those who are sorrowing most—and I take it that Her Royal Highness is of these the chief. I would fain send her somewhat that would be to her a precious relic of my lord."

And then he proceeded to lay before me his plan, talking all the time as if his only thought was for the Princess, so that I was smitten with a sense of exceeding selfishness. I had only thought of myself, and yet I knew well his love for my lord had not been a whit less than mine, and I could see by his face and the look in his eyes how much he was suffering. I readily agreed to all he proposed, and



we resolved to start for the Market Cross in an hour's time with Warden and Sydserf.

"In the meantime, lad, get some sleep if you can," said Gorthie, "for you need it sorely."

I shook my head, but I had not slept for near a week, and now that something of the strain and anxiety was over, I did doze for a few minutes more than once, waking ever with a start, and longing that I might wake no more.

It was nearly the hour for us to set out. Gorthie was still sitting with me, deeming I slept, but though mine eyes were closed, sleep had now left me, and anon, looking up, I saw that he was giving way in some measure at least to his grief. His face was buried in his hands, and I heard him murmur, "James! my dear lord!" Then he looked up and saw mine eyes opened. We said no word, only grasped one another's hands for a moment, and then rose and went out.

Cousin Elisabeth was in the passage.

"Come hither a minute, Nigel," said she, and I followed her into a room where a plate of meat was set forth, with a glass of wine and some bread. The children were playing on the floor. Archibald looked up at me for a minute with wondering eyes, and then continued his game; but little John came and stood by me all the time I was eating, with his hand on the arm of my chair. I could see he had been crying, for his eyes were still red and his cheeks hot. My heart was very strangely drawn to Claverhouse's little lad, and presently I put my arm round him and drew him on to my knee. He was very willing to



sit there, and began to talk to me in his slow, solemn way.

John: "Cousin Nigel?"

Glenternie: "Yea, child."

John: "You will come back safe?"

Glenternie: "I know not."

John: "But you must not be killed too, Cousin Nigel—because of the beautiful lady."

Archibald looked up from the floor—he was tying a string round the neck of a wooden doll.

"What beautiful lady?" he asked.

"Cousin Nigel showed me her picture," answered John, nodding his head mysteriously, "and one day he is going to wed her," he added confidently.

I had finished and rose to go, but first I lifted up the child and kissed him, and felt a sudden sense of almost consolation as John put his arms round my neck and laid a soft little cheek against mine.

"You will come back, Cousin Nigel?" he asked again, and this time I said, "I think so, John."

At this moment, Archibald burst in joyously, "He's ready, John. It slips beautifully," and John scrambled away from me to join his little cousin.

"What are you playing?" I asked. "Not with a doll, surely?"

"Oh, no, it's not a doll," cried John indignantly.

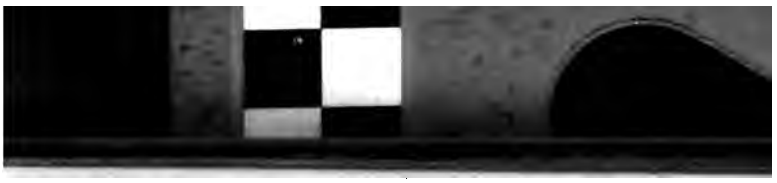
"It was a doll last week," explained Archibald. "It's Jean's. She left it behind her by mistake, when she went home, and now it is—tell him, John."

John swung the doll triumphantly to and fro by



the end of the string, and looking up at me with sparkling eyes, said, "It's Argyll, Cousin Nigel, and we are just hanging him!"

I turned away with a shudder, not even able to smile at the children's grim jest, and went out to find my comrades waiting below, all armed to the teeth. We were desperate men on a desperate errand, and hardly one of us cared if we came back alive. When we reached the Market Cross there was still a great crowd gathered, though not so many were at the windows as before, and the troops had left. I could not see the great gibbet without a sickening sense of horror rushing upon me, so that for the moment I felt as if I could not go on. But Gorthie laid a hand on my arm, saying, "Courage, lad—for her sake!" and I set my teeth and we pushed on through the crowd, who eyed us curiously, but made no attempt to stop us. My dear lord's body had been cut down from the gibbet, and was now stretched, as we perceived, on the scaffold, where the hangman stood preparing to sever it, according to the brutal sentence. Some ministers, one or two magistrates, and several Campbells—notably my Lord Lorne being present. At a sign from Gorthie we sprang up the steps of the scaffold with drawn swords, and flung ourselves upon the little group, scattering them to right and left. I had been given, by the kindness of Gorthie, the task I most desired, and amid the clash of swords on all sides, I knelt by my lord and cut off, with my dirk, a lock of his hair. It *had all* to be the work of a second, and I could



only give one last look at his face, and for one moment I stooped and kissed his brow. Then I rose and tried to give the shout that we had agreed upon for a signal, but could not speak, and only looked at Geoffrey, who was nearest to me, and he gave it in my stead. I jumped the eight feet to the ground, my comrades following one by one. We had counted, and not in vain, upon the sympathy of the by-standers. They made eager way for us, and we had plunged into a narrow close before we heard the sound of approaching pursuers. Gorthie was well acquaint with Edinburgh, and we kept behind him while he turned and twisted till we baffled those on our track, and gained a backyard leading to a very old house which he entered, we following. He shut the door and turned to us.

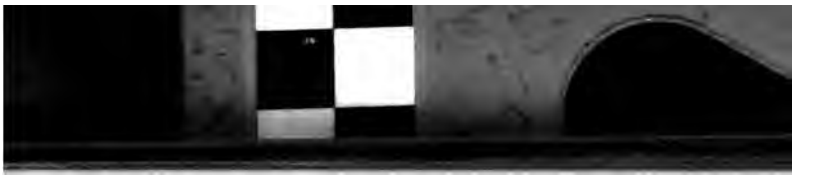
"I think, my friends," he said, "we shall do well to bide here till evening. Master Forrett's house is known by many, and may be suspected: This is the dwelling of one Master John Callendar, a loyal apothecary, and well known to Lady Napier."

Even as he spake, the door opened, and the good apothecary came out — of very brief stature, and burdened with a hump between his shoulders, yet of lofty brow and kindly eyes. He bade us welcome, and led the way to a room with an air that amazed me; but Gorthie told me afterwards that his mother had been of gentle blood. Meanwhile, I was struck with the mourning scarf around his arm, and the sorrow writ large on his countenance.

When we left his house that night, I questioned Gorthie concerning him, and learnt that when my lord was at Edinburgh, many years ago, he was one day about to set forth to dine with my Lord Menteith, when there came a poor dwarf begging at his door. He was being hustled away by the servants just as my young lord came out, and as he turned sadly from the door my lord called, "Ha! what do ye there, knaves?" and beckoned with his hand for the hunchback to draw near, who louted low and begged an alms.

"Take him within and give him food," quoth my lord. "And here are five shillings for you, my poor loon."

So my lord set forth, and thought, doubtless, little more of the wretched dwarf. A week or so later the fellow was being ill-used and mocked by some street knaves, when by came my lord on his white horse, and waved his hand with such a flash in his eye (I can well see it!) that the knaves fled. My lord spake kindly to the dwarf, and asked him of his name and parentage, and learning that his mother and father were dead and he was penniless, and perceiving from his face and address that he was a youth of parts who needed only a little helping to prosper, my lord spared no pains till he had the poor youth established as apprentice to a worthy apothecary; nor was he mistaken in his hopes, for the dwarf who in 1629 had begged his bread from door to door was now Master James Callendar of Edinburgh, an apothecary of note, who would have been as wealthy as any merchant in the city, but for



the many suffering Royalists he succoured. I was much interested in the tale as you may suppose. My dear lord! No wonder his friends were bound to him heart and soul!

CHAPTER XXV.

LADY NAPIER'S GIFT.

ON the morrow, Wednesday, May 22nd, Cousin Elisabeth and the children returned home, while the rest of us left the city at twilight and returned also to Merchiston—good Master Callendar being of our company. You will remember that my lord, when I did see him last in the Tolbooth, spake to me words which I understood not at the time—of somewhat that he had promised Cousin Elisabeth many years ago. When I returned to Master Forrett's, my kinswoman told me fully of the matter. It seems that my lord had tarried a week or more at Merchiston seven or eight years ago, before he went to England to warn the King of the treachery of the Covenanters. He had arrived some days earlier than was expected (I knew wherefore, minding his sudden departure from home), and both my Lord Napier and Archibald were away, so that my kinswoman must needs entertain her uncle alone, which I judge she did nothing loth, for she and my lord ever cherished a most deep regard for one another. That evening they walked in the garden and talked, first of the war in England,

then of the civil wars in our own country, in poor Queen Mary's days; and then my lord told her how John and I could speak of naught else but Wallace and Bruce, so they too fell a-talking of good King Robert and of the Black Douglas. And suddenly a great wish arose in Lady Napier's mind, and she prayed my lord earnestly that he would bequeath to her his heart—not to be carried to the Holy Land by one of his friends, but to be alway preserved as an heirloom in the family, "for," said she, "you may talk to me of Sir John the Graeme, or of those that fell at Flodden and Pinkie, but no gallant Graham has left behind him so great a name as you will."

At first my lord made merry of her request, but when he saw she was not to be moved, he said,

"It shall be yours for the asking, dear heart. I will not forget."

"Then we went in," concluded Lady Napier, "and he walked with me to the door of my chamber, and kissed me there and said, 'Never man needed a woman's love and sympathy more than I do to-night, Betty. Truly I thank you.'"

So saying, my kinswoman had set her needlework down on her knee, and looked at me questioningly. And I, who had never opened my lips to mortal man of that which I had seen and heard at Kincardine, told her all unhesitatingly.

"I believe," she said, "that my Lord Napier and Inchbraikie knew of the matter for some years before that time. You know not, Nigel, all that it meant to Montrose, and how in early days of the

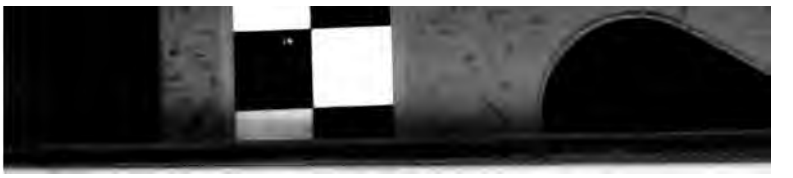
Covenant all the fair ladies of Edinburgh lost their hearts to him, and verily cast themselves as stumbling blocks in his paths; but he was resolved to throw his whole soul into the questions of the day and in this way kept himself from temptation. I cannot tell you how I rejoiced when my husband writ to me of Princess Louise."

"Oh cousin! if only—" I burst out. "Then he would have been Lord Lieutenant—and I know she would have loved the boys—and they would have adored her—and oh, how happy we should all have been!"

My kinswoman's eyes filled with tears, and she bent her head low over her work.

"I know, Nigel," she said mournfully, "I know. Have I not planned it a hundred times? But such happiness is not for us—here."

This conversation with Cousin Elisabeth had taken place at Master Forrett's, and I must now return to the Wednesday night at Merchiston. It was agreed that at all costs the deed should be done which would give Lady Napier her desire, and at midnight Gorthie with Sydserf and Callendar left the house for the Borough Muir, which lies not far south of Merchiston. I was fully prepared to go myself, though I had urged Geoffrey not to do so till he consented, for the poor lad was very unnerved. He had loved my lord very dearly, and beyond that Colonel Hewitt was to be executed in two days' time, and I knew well that Robin's conduct had cut him to the very heart, for his early liking for Killearn had ripened into a friendship as strong as it was



strange, and for a time we had hoped that Geoffrey's influence would have been the saving of Robin.

Before we set forth Cousin Elisabeth came to me privily and prayed me most earnestly not to go.

"You have much yet before you," she said; "it is you who have to go to Schiedam and Rhenen" (for Gorthie was first returning home in disguise), "and you will find it a heavy matter to be the bearer of such tidings."

Here Gorthie entered and seconded her warmly, so I gave way, for indeed I knew that she spake not without cause. I think I was very near losing my reason, only the one idea possessed me that I must yet go to Schiedam and Rhenen, and give my lord's last messages to those he loved.

It was a wild wet night, and half an hour after the others had gone, Geoffrey and I left the house and went slowly down the garden and through the little copse that separated the Merchiston grounds from the Borough Muir. The Muir is a lonely, swampy stretch used for the burying of criminals, whose bodies may not lie in consecrated ground. And with such was my lord set in death as in life by his ungrateful country! Geoffrey and I stood awhile on the edge of the copse, our cloaks drawn round us, for the rain came ever and again in great gusts. At last, through the mist our friends appeared.

"We have it," said Gorthie briefly, in answer to our looks of inquiry, and we asked no more—though I have often pondered on what may have passed on that wet night at the open grave.

I had promised Geoffrey to tarry in Edinburgh

till the Saturday, and arranged with the owner of a small trading vessel at Leith, bound for the Hague, to take us on board that evening. On Thursday, Sir William Hay of Dalgetty was executed, and on Friday, Colonel Hewitt, Major Grey and others. Geoffrey and I bided at Master Forrett's the while, and on Saturday afternoon went to Merchiston to say farewell. Meanwhile Master Callendar had embalmed my lord's heart, and my kinswoman had had a small case made for it—in shape like unto an egg—out of an old sword of my lord's which he had given a long while since unto Archibald. And then she had set this in a silver urn graven with the arms and motto of our house. I saw it upon the table in her room, and we staid awhile before it, and then she read softly, "Ne Oubliez."

"Never, cousin," quoth I, "night nor day, morning nor eventide. I see it before me always—the gibbet and the ladder—and my lord."

"Nay, not that, Nigel," she answered. "You know well I meant not that. Let us remember all that he did for the King and for Scotland, still more all that he was to those who loved him." Then after some minutes she went on, "Know you, Nigel, my heart misgives me when I see yonder urn. I fear I am selfish in thus keeping what many would give almost their life-blood to possess."

"But it was promised to you," I said. "And see what you have done for him. Have you not worked with loving hands the clothes that he wore, and the shroud that wraps his body in that nameless grave? Who but you and Archibald whom he so loved



should have it? The Princess has this ring and the lock of hair, and his heart too, in another sense."

"I was not thinking of the Princess," said Lady Napier, "my heart bleedeth for her, poor lady, but yet methinks she is happier than some, for she knew him and rejoiced in his love; and besides I may be wrong, but I could not bear that so precious a thing should pass from our family. It is ours, who are honoured to share his blood and lineage. I am rather thinking of one who has known him so little, yet loved him so much, and waited so patiently——"

"You are meaning James," I cried. "It is just like you, cousin. All these years he hath waited for our return. Hath he not suffered imprisonment for his father's sake, and refused to be set free for his father's sake?—and now for six years he hath not seen him—nor ever will."

"And he is the head of our family, too," added Lady Napier. "Nigel, he shall have it, and you shall bear it to him," and she dipped her hand into the urn, and took out the steel case and put it into mine. "Take it to James," she said, "with my love, and tell him how his father died."

So it came to pass that, when, a week later, having left Geoffrey with the Greys at the Hague, I walked down the clean broad streets of Schiedam, I bore in my pocket the great Marquis' heart as Lady Napier's gift to his son. It was a fair May evening, warm and pleasant, and on either hand the bright spring flowers bloomed with rich fragrance in the Dutch gardens. How neat the little town looked after Edinburgh! Yet how unhomelike it all was!

My brief sojourn in mine own land, melancholy as it had been, had roused in my heart a passionate longing for our grey skies and fresh northern air, and the rich colour of our Highland hills. I hate the stiff red tulips. How much sweeter are nodding bluebells, and purple heather with its glorious scent, that ever hath spoken to me in German forest or on French coast of home and country.

As I neared the Stirlings', I perceived before me a lady clad in deep mourning, with a basket on her arm. It did not need a red-brown curl escaping from the black hood to tell me that it was Lilias. I quickened my pace, and a moment brought me beside her. She started and looked at me as if she hardly knew me. Then she tried to speak but could not, and the hand that I held fast in mine was cold and trembling. I passed my arm about her and said at once,

"He fell by the standard with Hugh and Gilbert. I took this from his pocket for you," and I put the letter and the little prayer book into her eager hands.

"I knew, Nigel," she answered, steadying her voice with difficulty. "I was sure—quite sure—when the news came of the battle—but I feared you were killed too, and when I saw you I had a hope—for a moment. And oh, Nigel—mine uncle—you know——"

"I have come from Edinburgh even now," I said. "Let us go in and I will tell you all."

In a minute more we reached the little white gate, and ere we could open it a slight, boyish figure ran



out from the house to meet us, and as I grasped his hands in mine there struck of a sudden a cold chill to my heart—this was the Marquis of Montrose!

As we entered the house, Sir George and Cousin Margaret ran down the stairs and hastened to greet me, and hearing the stir, a man came forth from a room and gaped upon me amazed. It was Archibald, but for the moment I hardly knew him, so old and haggard had he become.

"Nigel!" he cried. "You come from Edinburgh? Ah, would to God that I might have been there!" And he turned away, his voice very broken. Never saw I man so changed. It was pitiful to see the misery and longing in his eyes. In truth he had had, perchance, the hardest time of any of us, for he had to sit idle at Hamburg with the reinforcements, waiting for orders to sail which never came. At the news that Montrose was a prisoner, he had disbanded the troops and come to Schiedam, where he had arrived the day before, only to hear the worst.

They took me into the dining-room and set food before me—Sir George standing over me, so to speak, while I took some wine and meat. I soon made an end, and then Lilias said,

"Tell us all, Nigel—from the battle."

So I told as best I could, hiding no whit of the sudden attack, the fight round the standard, my ghastly search through the dead and dying on the heather—and then I came to Robin. I hesitated a moment there, but it was right they should know, and when I had ended, Sir George Stirling said solemnly,

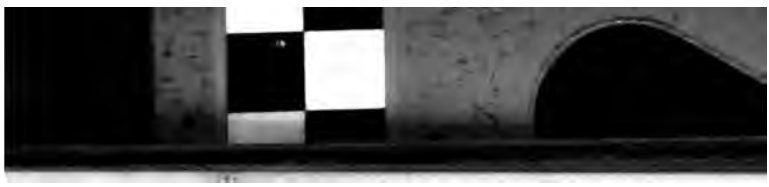
"Let that name never be mentioned among us. We will not own him as a kinsman."

We were silent for a space, then James, who was leaning over the back of my chair whispered,

"And my father, Nigel? Where was he the while?"

So I spake of Assynt and of the arrest, and Lilias flung herself on her knees by Cousin Margaret's side, and hid her face in her sister's lap, weeping passionately. Sir George moved to the window, and stood there all the time, leaning out and gazing on the sweet-scented garden, but Archibald made no attempt to hide his grief and sat at the table with his head buried in his arms. Then, as the twilight was falling, I told them of that stormy night at Keith, and how I held converse with my lord, and I gave them one by one the messages he had sent them. They rejoiced that Robin and David had been permitted to see their father, but I knew well there was one there who found that part of my tale very hard to bear. I moved to the side of my chair, and signed to James to come and sit with me—which he did gladly, twining his arm about me as he was wont to do in old days. I felt at first I could not speak of Edinburgh, but forced myself to do it, and related all in a strange hoarse voice that seemed not mine own.

Archibald lifted his head and tried to smile when I spoke of the exceeding kindness of his good wife, and they were all wrought to a great joy and pride as they heard how my dear lord had faced the mob at his entry into Edinburgh, and of the business at



Moray's balcony. After awhile a silence fell on us for a long space, and then Margaret said,

"Nigel, you must go to rest, for you have to go to Rhenen, and——"

She stopped, and Sir George, coming back from the window, lit the lamp. He looked at me and then at his wife with a shake of his head, but he only said,

"I will take you up to your room, Glenternie."

"One moment, sir," I said, "I have yet a little more to tell."

They had all risen, and drew near as I took from my pocket a small steel case. I told them of my lord's promise—of which some of them knew—and then how his heart had been attained, and of Lady Napier's wish. James stood by me the while, his eyes fixed on the case and an eager flush on his face. It was touching to see the lad's emotion as I put it into his hands. He strove in vain to speak, but no words would come, and I linked my arm in his, asking Cousin Margaret if he might share my room that night. She readily acquiesced, and when the lad was alone with me he broke down utterly. He told me how he had hated the life at Kinnaird, and lived for the day when he might join his father abroad. My lord had promised him that he should come to us when he was seventeen (which indeed he then was), but had writ to him in the late autumn saying that he would be in Forfarshire with an army in the early spring, and that he would come to Kinnaird himself and take the boy from the guardianship of my Lord Southesk. On this hope James had lived,



and when the news came that we had landed and were marching south he was half-crazed with joy. But soon there followed the tidings of Invercarron fight, with a report that Montrose had fallen in the battle, as Gibbie had told me; and James, in desperation, with the help of a servant and some fishermen at Old Montrose had left Kinnaird secretly, and made his escape on board a trading vessel bound for Schiedam. He had longed to take his little brothers with him and they to come, but they knew their father desired them to remain at Kinnaird for the present, so they had stayed, and had thus the privilege of seeing their father on earth once more. I did my best to cheer James, telling him that I knew Harry had his father's sword for him, and that my lord had writ to him from Kinnaird—whereat he took some comfort.

Presently he forgot his troubles in slumber, but I could not sleep. Before me was the dreadful vision of the gibbet at the Market Cross. I tossed and turned, and seemed unable so much as to close my eyes. I felt as once before I had felt at Master Forrett's, that my senses were slipping away from me, and knew not whether it were a reality or some horrible dream. Then in the darkness I saw my lord's face, white and still, as I had seen it last on the scaffold, and I called to him but there was no response—and after that I remember no more.

James woke to find me talking wildly, and fled for Cousin Margaret. For weeks I lay there, knowing no one; the leech indeed despaired of my life, but Margaret and Lilias nursed me with exceeding care



and devotion, and one warm July evening I woke from a quiet sleep and knew myself. I was alone in a room that seemed unfamiliar, and I lay for a while wondering where I might be and what had chanced that I should be lying there as weak as a babe. I heard the bells chiming and so guessed it was the Sabbath. Then the door opened very softly and a little lad entered on tiptoe, and quickly withdrew on seeing me move.

"He is awake, Cousin Lilias," I heard, and then, "Thank you, David," and Lilias came in and gave me somewhat hot to drink and whispered with shining eyes,

"You are better, Nigel, but you must not talk."

It was the sight of her mourning dress and saddened face that brought my sorrow back to me with a sudden rush, and I turned from her, my whole soul going up in one pitiful prayer,

"O God, let me die!"

I think my misery and exceeding great desire to depart would have been the undoing of me, despite my cousin's care and devotion; but that very evening I heard a sweet voice singing a lullaby in the garden without, and knew that it was the same I had heard two months before in the orchard at Merchiston. I prayed that I might see her and she came to me and comforted my heart as only Elisabeth Napier could do. She had come with her two youngest to join Archibald at last, leaving the elder ones with Lady Claverse, and had brought Robin and David with her, as my lord had desired that they should henceforth live with Archibald or



the Stirlings. Ah, what a joyful reunion this would have been if one had not been missing!

Besides Lady Napier I had ere long mine own sweet Margaret to cheer my convalescence, for the Stirlings very kindly asked her from Rhenen on a long visit, which lasted till I was in proper health to escort her back thither.

When I first became ill, Archibald had taken upon himself the responsibility—and rightly—of carrying my lord's ring to the Princess. When I saw her she was very calm and controlled while we talked of my dear lord, but she had lost her old sprightfulness of manner, and her face was pale and worn. She was exceeding sweet and gracious to me—so also was the Queen, who conversed with me much, ofttimes shedding tears as she spake of my lord, and telling me he was the noblest man she had ever known.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BABE.

I HAD fully determined to be off again in a few weeks to seek my fortune under Turenne, or if need be to serve the King for my lord's sake. He had crossed to Scotland and taken the Covenant—poor misguided boy! And David Leslie, at the head of an army which I suppose the Covenanters would be pleased to call a royal one, had been roundly beaten by the rebel Cromwell near Dunbar. God forgive me if I was glad! I would not willingly speak evil of the King, and I will only say here that so far as a simple man can judge of high matters of state, he did not deal fairly with my dear and noble lord.

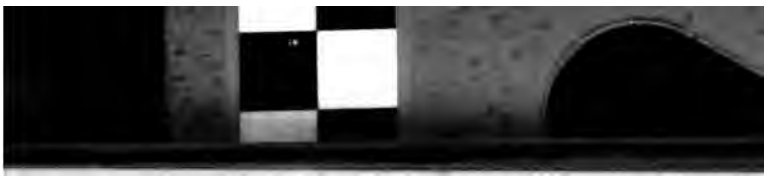
My Lord Craven—at the Queen's instigation, I believe—himself suggested that Margaret and I should be wed without delay, and provided a sufficient dower for her. I had enough for mine own needs—if I was careful—sent me year by year by faithful tenants at home, so that I was able to take rooms in a small house at Schiedam, about half a mile from the Stirlings. I married your grandmother, children, on Michaelmas Day in 1650. Her Royal Highness gave me as a wedding gift a copy



she had made with her own hands of Master Honthorst's portrait of my lord, which, as you know, hangs above the fireplace in the hall.

I dwelt with my wife at Schiedam for the space of some months, but at the end of that time I could no longer bear the dull quiet life, and she seeing it bade me go forth with never a thought of herself. I deemed that there might be doings in Scotland with the coming spring, and though I would fain have sought an employment in France, I felt duty urged me to return home. So in March I went, and Geoffrey with me. Sir George was no soldier by desire; only the love he bore my lord had taken him to the war, and when I asked Archibald if he would come with us he said—well, I will not say what he said, for it is better left unwritten. James was eager to come, but as he was not yet nineteen Sir George bade him bide his time. He went later in Glencairn's rising. I was in Germany then, and heard naught of it till it was over, but I understand that it was about as sorry an affair as well could be. Men realised then the genius of a leader who could hold the Highland clans together.

Geoffrey and I went to Aberdeen, and passed easily through the Gordon country to mine own lands. Ere long came the news that the King had taken matters into his own hands and called on all who would to follow him to England. Argyll had gone home, or I swear I would never have raised a finger, so we joined the army, and the King, minding me well enough, gave me a commission, and Geoffrey also, with a graceful little reference to my dear lord,



which seemed a trifle hollow, with David Leslie in command of half the troops. I fear I must confess to a certain satisfaction—not at our annihilation on Worcester field (God forbid!) but at Leslie's base desertion. I was near the King when he appealed so passionately to the three thousand Covenanters, who could well have saved the day, and I heard his involuntary exclamation, "Oh, for Montrose alive and in his place!" But whose fault was it that the Great Marquis was not there?

We had much ado to get away to the continent, for the English Roundheads were very vigilant; but we went to Warden's house, and there his mother hid us, and secretly fed us for several weeks, till the country was quiet again. So rejoiced was she to set eyes on her boy once more that we tarried full a fortnight after we might well have gone, I consumed with impatience, for why you shall soon hear. It was the middle of October before we left Bristol in disguise on board a vessel bound for Havre. From there we went by sea to Schiedam, and one wild November afternoon, leaving Geoffrey to look in at the Stirlings' and acquaint them with our arrival, I hastened on to find my wife, for only one letter had ever reached me from her, given to me by an English Cavalier from Schiedam when I joined the King six months before.

I found the door of the house ajar, and none seemed to be about, so that I went quietly in unobserved, and up to my wife's chamber. I knocked and opened the door.

"Hush!" said Margaret softly, and then she gave

a little cry of joy as she saw who it was. "Oh, Nigel, have you really come back to us at last?"

To *us!* I was on my knees at her side by this time, for she was seated by the fire, and on her lap was a tiny pink thing rolled up in a shawl.

"Is it a boy?" I cried eagerly.

"Yes, Nigel," she said, full of pride and joy. Isn't he lovely?"

Now I am always sorry to disagree with any lady —still more when the lady is my wife—but all babes that I have ever seen are just the same, and equally ugly, and I could not honestly confess that the countenance of my son and heir moved me to any admiration.

"Let me see him," I said by way of evading the difficulty, and picking him up with care I carried him off to the window.

"How old is he?" I asked.

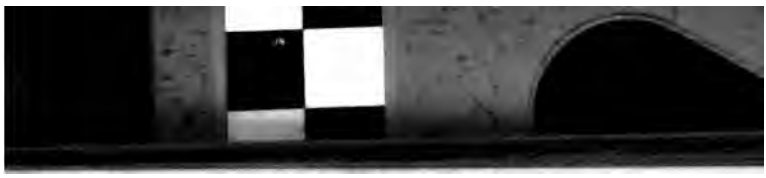
"Six weeks to-day," said Margaret.

"And what have you called him?"

"James."

I nodded, well pleased. But the babe was not so content. Doubtless I held him somewhat clumsily At all events he opened a pair of dark blue eyes, lifted up his voice, and wept aloud. I hastily returned him to his mother, who soothed him to sleep while I stood looking down at them, and knew that life was worth living still—even for me. And then I spake the thought that all the time had been uppermost in my heart. "If only my lord could see him——"

"Perchance he doth," whispered my wife gently.



CHAPTER XXVII.

THE MONK OF SAARBURG.

I HAD thought to write much more in this book—to tell of our simple life at Schiedam, and of our joy in the five sweet children God gave to us, and how Alan Keith came to us on his way to a German University, having resigned his commission, and told me many things of my dear lord's last days which I could never otherwise have known. These and many other things concerning the Princess and our kinsfolk, and Archibald Napier's sad death at Delfshaven almost at the end of his exile, and the irreparable loss of our dear kinswoman, Lilias, who was as a sister to me; all this and more I fain would tell. But these things will never be set down now. Last night, when I had written of the birth of our eldest son, I sat in thought a while, till the children burst in with the news that horsemen were to be heard riding up the avenue. I went at once to the door, suspecting whom I should see, and found, as I had judged, Viscount Dundee dismounting from his horse. Ere I could so much as bid him welcome, he said,



"We have a price on our heads, sir, and we come to raise the clans for the King."

"Then you are doubly welcome, John, for auld lang syne," quoth I.

"I know it," he said, and then, turning to a gentleman behind him, he added, "I need hardly present Mr. Warden."

I was overjoyed to see Geoffrey, for it was now some years since he had paid us a visit; and I learnt that Claverse had passed through his village on his way to the north after leaving King James in the winter. Geoffrey had shown him every hospitality, and had finally been persuaded to accompany him, and had been at his side for the past few months, wonderfully attracted by my kinsman's personality.

To-morrow I set forth with them for Inverness, and I have within me a certain knowledge that I shall never return. It is nearly forty years since my dear lord left us. It has been a long, long waiting, and I fear me I have often been impatient—and now my time hath come. I grieve to leave Margaret though, yet Griselda is a right loving daughter to her, and the little ones are a constant joy—but she hath never been quite the same since Ralph, our youngest son, fell by my side at Strasburg, eight years ago; and she still misses our little Lilias. So, in truth do I—but I cannot grudge her to George Napier; and it hath been a sweet bond to draw me and Cousin Elisabeth nearer together.

Ere I shut this book I must speak briefly of one thing, lest in leaving much unsaid I wrong one, of whom I have had heretofore to write little good.



The Monk of Saarburg.

In 1674, I was serving under Turenne, and was rather severely wounded in a skirmish at Saarburg. We were pushing on to join the main body of the army at Colmar as rapidly as possible, and it would have gone hardly with those who had fallen, had not some monks from a neighbouring monastery come out and offered to take charge of us. I found myself half an hour later, in a little cell not ten feet square. Save for the rough mattress on which I was laid there was no furniture. A dim lamp was set in a niche in the wall, and its flickering light fell on a crucifix hanging on the opposite side of the chamber, Through the narrow window I heard the voices of the monks at prayer; and I lay and marvelled how men could willingly cut themselves off from friends and home, and the joys which God hath so freely given us—not for us to shun, surely?

As I thus pondered, one of the brethren entered, and asked me in French if I had all I desired. I assured him that I was most comfortable. Then he explained to me that I was in occupation of his cell, and he trusted he would in no wise disturb me if he went to his devotions as usual. Thereat he knelt on the stone floor before the crucifix, and I lay watching him, for his face and voice troubled me. He looked about fifty, but his hair was quite grey; his face was thin and sad, and his eyes very dark and earnest. I felt I had seen him before long ago, at home. And as I wondered and watched I fell asleep, and woke some hours later, hungry. The lamp was out, but in the moonlight I could see the figure of the priest still kneeling with bowed head. As I stirred he rose quickly and lit the lamp.

"I go to get you some food, monsieur," he said, and left the cell. I was resolved to question him on his return as to his name and parentage, but fell into such pain and dizziness that neither that night nor the next day did I feel able for conversation. Meanwhile the monk devoted himself to me, and Margaret could hardly have nursed me with more care. On the third day I was better, and as he sat by me in the forenoon I said,

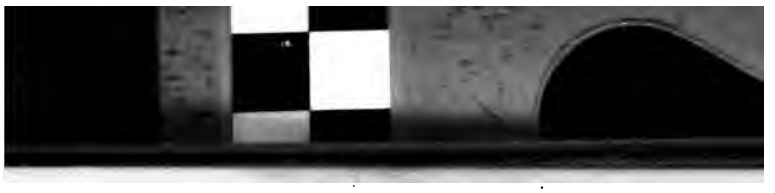
"You will do me a favour, my father, if you will tell me your name."

"My name is Brother Antony," he answered.

"But before you took these monkish vows?" I persisted, though I perceived that he was not over-pleased at my question.

"The past," he said solemnly, "is buried, monsieur, with the sins that stained it. A nobler name than mine never man bore." He threw back his tonsured head proudly—and I knew. The old gesture betrayed him instantly—it was Robin. I in no way manifested my recognition, and he went on sadly, "But, monsieur, I disgraced my name and my father's house, and I injured my best friend irreparably—and so I am here to-day—Brother Antony and none else; and if penitence can atone—" He broke off, and murmured in a trembling voice "Miserere mei, Deus!"

There was such a depth of sorrow in his voice that I, who debated with myself whether even now to turn from him in anger, was wrought to a great pity. Here was a man struggling heavenward over the wreck of his life. God forbid that I should



make his journey upward a whit more steep. Perchance even the hand of an old comrade might help him on the road. As I lay turning the matter over in my mind the chapel bell rang, and while Robin was gone I fell asleep. In my sleep I thought I saw my lord's face, and he smiled on me, so that I was sure that I was doing right, and I sought some means to reveal to Robin that I knew him.

I settled my plan of campaign, and the next time he came to me I said, "When I was carried in here my cloak was wrapped about me—is it here?"

"It hangs on a nail without," he said.

"Then I pray you of your courtesy," I said, "go and feel in the pocket. You will there find a letter which was delivered to me lately, but which I have only had time to glance at."

He went, and returned after a little space. I saw his hand was not steady as he gave me the packet, and there was a strange, wistful look in his eyes—he had seen the Warden seal on the back. I opened it and made a pretence to read somewhat, and then cast it down wearily.

"My friend's hand is growing exceeding crabbed," I observed, "and in this light I can scarce make aught of it. Can you read the English tongue?"

"That I can," he answered readily.

"You are not a Frenchman?" I demanded abruptly.

"Sir," he said, "when I forsook my old life I resolved to live a stranger in a strange land to my dying day."

I said no more, and after a slight hesitation, he took up the letter and read,

"HAZELWOOD MANOR,
"*June, 1674.*

"MY DEAR BROTHER," (Geoffrey alway began thus.)

"I have no doubt you are off to France by this time, so I am sending this by the hand of a young kinsman, who is about to seek his fortune with Turenne, trusting it may reach you eventually.

"First, let me thank you with all my heart for your hospitality to me and mine this spring. You must let me return it more fully when you come home. In the meanwhile we are very glad to have James with us. He and Guy are never parted, and our little Griselda makes a very good third. It is perchance too soon to speak of these matters, but I think you were quite right in what you hinted to me last month, and I need scarcely say how delighted are Dorothy and I that it should be so." (The monk tried to read in an indifferent tone, but I could see with half an eye that he was desperately interested in the letter, and ever and anon he glanced down the page with a sort of nervous apprehension as to what might follow.) "You will, I know," went on Geoffrey, "be glad to hear that I left Dorothy and the children for two days at Perth, as we were returning, and turned aside to Killearn. I had not seen the old Laird since 1660, and he struck me as getting very aged and feeble." (There was a slight



pause. Brother Antony's voice was a little uncertain, but he mastered himself and went on.) "He told me he had never heard of Robin all these years, nor did he wish to do so—speaking of him very hardly at first as of old; but later, before I left, he——"

There was a break in the monk's voice, he essayed to go on, but could not. Then he lifted his eyes to mine; he saw I knew, he saw my hand held out to him, and he clasped it in both his, and said brokenly,

"Oh, Nigel—can you——"

I think there were tears in his eyes—I know there were in mine.

By degrees I drew from him all his story since I had last seen him. He did not leave Scotland till after my dear lord's death, and was in Edinburgh when we were, but dared not show his face at Merchiston or at Master Forrett's, still less at Killearn. Afterwards he went abroad and lived a wild dissolute life in France and Belgium, plunging as the years went by deeper and deeper into vice. The turning-point in his life was in 1657. He was desperately wounded in a duel in the autumn of that year, and was carried thus hurt to a convent near. There he was tended, strangely enough, by Princess Louise herself, who had a year before taken the vows there. She had heard of his conduct at Invercarron from us, but naught would deter her from nursing him herself. And when Robin was better and could bear it, she told him how once my lord had spoken of him to her—so sadly and yet so lovingly—and Robin was overcome with shame and sorrow at his own life, and rose up from his sick bed

a new man. He resolved to live henceforth a life of penitence, and never to return home. His whole life was now spent among the sick and poor, and he told me with a longing look how sometimes he would come across a Scots soldier or officer in the French service, and what joy it was to him.

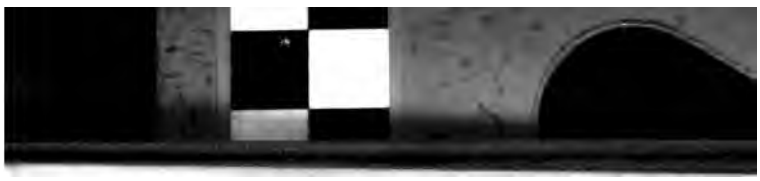
"You must come home with me, Robin, next year," I said. "I can promise you a welcome at Glenternie, and I believe you will have one at Killearn."

"I must not break my vow," he said. "Besides, I could not go home—I am an outcast and disinherited—and that is far less than my deserts; but I think I will write to my father, and if you will, go to him when you get home and tell him all."

Then he asked much of the Wardens and said he would write also to Geoffrey.

Three weeks later I rode away, and when I returned home in eighteen months' time I went to Killearn. The place struck me as strangely silent and lonely as I rode up to the house. The old man-servant opened the door for me with tears in his eyes, and told me that his master had died that very morning. I went up to the Laird's room. He was lying on his bed—there was a smile on his lips, and in his hand he was holding a miniature—it was of a little lad of six or seven with a beautiful face and innocent brown eyes. I slipped the letter, too, into the dead man's hand and went away.

That is more than fourteen years ago. I wonder if Robin Graham of Killearn still labours among the sick and needy at Saarburg.



EPILOGUE.

GLENTERNIE,
July 31st, 1689.

LAST night we laid my father's body to rest in a corner of the little kirkyard, where the bracken rustles in the evening breeze, and the tall pine-trees moan sadly on the wind-swept hillside. And to-day my mother hath placed this book in my hands, and bade me add somewhat in conclusion and relate the manner of his death. I have just read it through, and it hath brought back to my mind many stories I have heard long ago which I had well-nigh forgotten—and again there come before me the tall clean Dutch houses and the little wharf at Schiedam, which is the first place I can remember. We lived in a narrow street, and the Wardens dwelt opposite. I mind well how Guy Warden and I would cast all manner of things across from window to window; and we had also what Guy called "a line of communication" (for he was very military even from his cradle) the which was formed of our Sabbath sashes and my mother's wimple knotted together. My dear father winked at such like performances. He was wonderfully patient

and merciful towards us, and when my mother would fain have chastised me—which doubtless I well merited—he would intervene on my behalf, saying, "Dear heart, what would you have? Boys will be boys, and John and I were no better."

There must be few men and women in the world who can look back on so pleasant a childhood as we had. The periodical visits of great-aunt Catherine were my one dread, and I never felt secure till I saw her safely mounted on a pillion behind her man-servant, ready to start back to the Hague, where she lived with her husband, a stout Dutch burgomaster. My father could not afford to pay for either nurses or tutors, so that we were far more with our parents than children are usually permitted to be. Our sweet mother did everything for us except teaching us. When my father was at home we received instruction from him, and when he was away fighting, Mr. Warden was so good as to allow me (and, when they were old enough, John and Hugh also) to share in the lessons he gave to Guy. Guy was but six months my junior, and as we were inseparable this arrangement was highly pleasing to us.

After my father and mother there was no one I loved so much in the world as Aunt Lilias. My father was a grave silent man—(though my mother hath ofttimes told me that before the death of the Great Marquis, he was the life and soul of Montrose's suite), and in truth from all he saith in this book, I can well believe it, yet Aunt Lilias was never content till she had set us all

laughing, and with ceaseless jests she would rouse my father from his usual quiet. She would play with Guy and me every evening, and on one never to be forgotten occasion, inveigled my father and Mr. Warden into a game of hide-and-seek with us. That night as my mother sat by me for a few minutes (as was her wont), after I was in bed, I said to her with much decision, "If Aunt Lilias is still unwed when I am a man I shall marry her."

And my mother told me how—though she seemed to us so bright and merry—she loved a brave English gentleman, who had fallen at Invercarron by my father's side, and that was why she was unwed, though many men adored her. So then I knew why she would sometimes look so sad when she was not talking or laughing, and why she loved my baby brother, Ralph, so dearly, for he had been called after Captain Beverley.

It was not long after that that Aunt Lilias went away to stay at Delfshaven with some friends, and one day I came down to breakfast to find my mother crying bitterly and my father looking out of the window with his hands behind him. An open letter lay on the table and I noted the Stirlings' crest on the seal.

"Tell him, Nigel," said my mother looking up."

My father signed to me to come to him. Then he sat on the window-seat, and lifting me on his knee, he told me that when Aunt Lilias had left us, not three weeks since, a fever had broken out at Delfshaven. She had been nursing and doing her uttermost for some English and Scottish exiles, who

were smitten with the plague. Then she had taken it herself and died in a few days. It was my first sorrow, and as real and deep as a childish sorrow can be. I remember that for weeks I could not realise it. I felt that there must have been some mistake, and that one day, Aunt Lilias would walk in with her sweet face and laughing eyes. But the months went by and she never came.

All this time my father was inexpressibly loving and tender towards my mother, who grieved sorely for her friend. But in truth he was always that. He had a singularly kind and gracious way with him, so that he was much beloved by all his acquaintances, and also by his servants and tenants. I think the only time I was really in disgrace with him was when I mocked our Dutch maid because she was so fat. He was very wroth indeed, and made me apologize to her, and then sent me to my room for the rest of the day, saying, "No gentleman is ever wanting in courtesy to his inferiors."

We came home in the spring of 1660, when I was eight years old. I was sore troubled at being parted from Guy Warden, who left with his parents and his little sister for England at the same time. Yet I was cheered by the delight of seeing Glenternie, of which I had heard much, and of living in the country among our own people. Our kinsmen all returned with us, and were ever welcome guests at our house. My dear father was overjoyed at his return from exile, and delighted in rambling over the country-side again, and in showing us where he had golfed, and fished, and ridden with the Great Marquis



before the war broke out. Naught could give him more pleasure than to meet with gentlemen he had known in the rebellion and to fight the old battles over again. It was wonderful to see his love for his dead General, and well do I recollect two instances which showed me that my kindly dignified father was the same person, who in his boyish days had bearded Colonel Hewitt in a Paris tavern, and had stood by the Great Marquis in his darkest hour.

About ten years ago we had been tarrying awhile with MacDonald of Glengarry, and were returning home through Invernesshire. Riding down a narrow glen one evening we perceived a gentleman being attacked and overpowered by a couple of Highland caterans. We went to his rescue, of course, and the rogues made off. He addressed my father in Gaelic with profuse expressions of gratitude, and entreated us to ride with him to some kinsman's house, which he said was near. We were intending to push on some dozen more miles that evening, and so refused, and after a little friendly talk, were about to part, when he held out his hand saying, "Farewell, gentlemen. Believe me, MacLeod of Assynt, will be ever at your service."

I had started at the words, for he wore no tartan, and such a possibility had never entered our heads. My father drew himself up, and with indescribable dignity put his hand behind his back and bowed.

"I am a Graham, sir," he said very quietly, yet something in the tone and look brought colour to the fellow's cheek. I do not wonder. Then my father turned abruptly on his heel, and swung himself

into the saddle and rode off, I following. For a mile or more he spake no word. Then he remarked, "Catiff hound! Had he not been wounded and disabled, this hour would have been his last!"

"It was not Neil MacLeod himself, sir, was it?" I ventured to ask. "He was scarce old enough——"

"A son probably," said my father, "but it boots not—traitors all." And while I marvelled that he who was one of the most forbearing and generous of men should harbour such bitter enmity, he observed with much frankness and simplicity, "I would have cut him down there as he was, but I knew my lord would not wish me to do so."

The other occasion was at Perth not three months since. We had gone there on business, and were supping in a tavern ere our return home. A couple of gentlemen entered, clad in Highland coat and trews of Campbell tartan. My father appeared to be unconscious of their presence, yet I noted that he had perceived the tartan with the tail of his eye. Their talk turned on politics, and anon one of them referred to the Great Marquis in words highly contemptuous. My father rose, and walking across the room with his hand on his sword-hilt, bade the Whig retract what he had said, and then, when he refused, challenged him to fight. The Campbells agreed, and we stepped outside to a stretch of greensward behind the inn. I was my father's second. He contented himself with disabling his opponent, and then we rode away home, he in the merriest mood I have ever known him.

Soon after that we began to hear of trouble in the



south, and though he shook his head continually over King James the Eighth, he would say to me:

"There will be stirring times yet, lad, and maybe I shall live to strike another blow for the King. No Dutchman shall ever call himself King of Scotland, please God—though King James is not all we could wish."

When Lord Dundee came to Glenternie with Mr. Warden on his way to raise the clans, my father seemed almost young again; yet the very morning we left he called me to his side and walked up and down the terrace with his hand on my shoulder.

"James," he said, "I wish you to give me your word to fight for the Stewarts to the end." (And I gave it.) "I want you also to promise me that, if possible, you will never go abroad again while your mother is alive."

I promised, but something in his tone made me look at his face, and seeing my glance, he said quietly:

"I shall never return home. I go to my last fight—of that I am assured—and Margaret will need you to comfort and care for her."

I would fain have remonstrated with him, yet I found myself unable to say a word, and my heart misgave me that it would be as he said. He was my Lord Dundee's right hand in the weeks that followed. His knowledge of the country, his familiarity with Highland etiquette and custom, and his command of the Gaelic language rendered him invaluable, while his habitual melancholy seemed

to have almost forsaken him. In truth, it gave me a glimpse of what he might have been if his life had not been changed and spoilt forty years ago. No doubt it was partly the companionship of his old brother-in-arms, partly too, being with Lord Dundee, for whom he entertained the greatest affection, partly also fighting with the clans again after his experience with foreign armies, yet there seemed to be a sort of exultation about him as the prospect of an engagement drew near, which none of these things could quite explain.

Surely the battle of Killiecrankie Pass will go down to posterity as so easily won, yet costing the victors far more than the vanquished. In that brief space Mr. Warden was to be numbered among the slain. Our noble kinsman and commander was mortally wounded, and my father also fell, pierced by a shot. I would fain have carried him back to Blair Castle, but he would not suffer it, and bade me lay him on the heather, where he had fallen on the brow of the hill. He never lost consciousness, but watched the clansmen sweeping the enemy down the glen with a gleam of pleasure in his eyes.

"Elcho's men ran like that at Tippermuir," he observed. "That was my first fight."

He had seen Mr. Warden go down, but did not know Dundee had fallen, and gave me a message for him, and I had not the heart to tell him that I feared our gallant General was dying or dead. He spake little, but ever and anon would give me a message for those he loved. Presently he tried to take out the locket he carried in a pocket beneath

his doublet, but he could not, and he let me do it for him.

"I want you to see that this is buried with me," he said. And then, after a pause, he added, "Take care of your mother, my son. Tell her I shall look and long for her."

For the space of half an hour he lay with his head on my knee, and his eyes closed. I would my mother could have seen him then, for there was a look of great peace upon his face such as I had never known there before. Then as the Highlanders began to return from the pursuit and the sound of pipes rose from the pass, mingled with shouts of victory, he raised his head for a moment and gazed eagerly upward, as if he could see through the sunset glory over Schiehallion to somewhat beyond. "At last——," I heard him murmur. "My dear lord——," and so saying he passed quietly away.

* * * * *

When I returned home I found John and Hugh were back from the Continent and all agog to be fighting for the King. They will leave to-morrow to join the army — though methinks that with Dundee dead the cause is already lost. I have resolved to remain at home for a few months, for I think my mother needeth me. When I came to her yesterday in the pleasant little south room, which we always called hers, and told her my father had fallen, she received the news with marvellous calmness—and seeing my wonder, she said:

"I cannot wish him back—he is at Montrose's side again—and it will not be for long."

In truth my sweet mother is beginning to look very frail and older than her years, so that I fear she may be right.

It is strange not to hear my dear father's voice and step about the house, and to see his sword and pistols hanging beneath the Great Marquis's portrait in the hall—never to be taken down more. He seemed to be a link with an age that is passed. Yet is it happier for him, for if this war is the beginning—as I sadly fear—of a new *régime*, it is better that he should be gone. We of the younger generation must face the future alone. What will it bring in these degenerate days? In truth I know not—only I feel that we shall never see again such as we have lost—gentlemen of the old school, without fear and without reproach.

FINIS.

Jarrold and Sons, Limited, Printers, The Empire Press, Norwich.





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